Michael Kessler is now completing his dissertation, “The Emergence of Legal Positivism: Just Law Wrought from Human Hands?” A graduate of Valparaiso University who came to Chicago with a set of interests located at the intersection of law, the environment, and moral deliberation, Kessler concentrated his doctoral program on ethics. His dissertation begins with the observation that moral and legal norms have different bases for their thinking. Moral norms underscore our duty to respect persons and have their basis in metaphysical systems of truth. Legal norms regulate exchanges between people according to the rights those people bear and have their basis in the stipulation and recognition of individual interest. Moral norms address the will. Legal norms adjudicate interest in the political arena.

This division troubles Kessler because he thinks it jeopardizes both the basic respect for persons and the capacity to act politically that are the hallmarks of a healthy social order. Value has become equated with power; it is understood as profit, expansion, and technical resources find it increasingly difficult to protect themselves through legal norms. At the same time, the recourse to advocacy is, Kessler maintains, severely compromised both by this very ethos that respects self-interest and by a corresponding skepticism about the human capacity to change the world in any but the most strategic ways. We face the distressing irony, Kessler writes, that “contemporary legal and political systems, while originally formed to facilitate and ensure respect for persons, have increasingly diminished this notion of respect to the margins, suppressing all notions of legitimate motivation except for self-interest.”

Kessler proposes to overcome this gap by rethinking the moral norm of respect for persons in such a way that it makes imperative our participation in legal and political advocacy. To this end, he articulates a mode of moral being that he terms “agonanomy,” which he defines as “a life of respect for others that motivates one to participate in legal-political structures, as an advocate for another’s interests.” The term is derived from the Greek conception of the agora, or marketplace of the polis, that serves as the home both for commerce and for law, both for the exchange of goods and for the resolution of disputes. To develop fully this notion—and to do so in a way that honors both the best of the moral and legal traditions while also creating space for the critique of each—Kessler engages the thought of the philosopher Immanuel Kant and the theologian Paul Tillich. Each, Kessler contends, argued for a strong relationship between the moral and the legal, and each contributed unwittingly to the dilemma we must address. Immanuel Kant develops the notion of self-autonomy and the notion that humans owe a duty of respect to all other rational agents. Such duty mandates a political order that ensures that individual action and personal freedom are maximal. So far, so good, according to Kessler. The problem arises in Kant’s stipulation of a transcendental idea of freedom for all humans, an idea that our knowledge of the world belies and that assumes a notion of reason that utterly transcends social circumstances. What Kant would stipulate as universal is, in our contemporary situation, manifestly not so. In this context, Kessler turns to Tillich. In one respect, Tillich’s argument is helpful and promising: we respect others not because of universal reason, but because of universal Being. Each of us participates in this Being, and when we respond to this Being in love, we act to ensure the preservation of all who do so. This principle has the potential, lacking in Kant, to transcend the myriad circumstances that describe our globe. Yet Tillich’s account is ineluctably based in the Christian community, and the world community is demonstrably more than Christian.

The challenge, then, is to argue for the intrinsic link of moral and legal norms in a way that honors and seriously addresses the pluralisms of language, politics, and belief that describe the twenty-first century. Hence “agonanomy.” Kessler is much taken with the image of Hephastos’ shield depicting two different cities described in Book 18 of Homer’s Iliad: one city describes gods and mortals in bitter combat, while the other displays a peaceful city in which justice is enacted in meetings of people to debate the issue. “Neither the gods’ intervention nor a private settlement between parties,” Kessler notes, “is sufficient to adjudicate the issue.” This image delineates his hopes for “agonanomy” as the condition of rational freedom, a revised law of moral freedom in which discourse and deliberation are fundamental and based on neither the dubious affirmation of sheer autonomy, nor the particular affirmation of specific divinity: it is instead the insistence that respect for the other as other imbues not only the individual human or the divine mandate, but the legal and

Continued on page 7
Daniela L. Overmyer Named Alumnus of the Year 2001

Dr. Daniel L. Overmyer is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Asian Studies and the Centre for Chinese Research at the University of British Columbia and Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Arts at Shanghai Normal University. He earned his B.A. in 1957 from Westminster College in Le Mars, Iowa, with a major in Biology, and his B.D. in 1960 from Evangelical Theological Seminary in Naperville, Illinois. He went on to earn his M.A. in the History of Religions in 1966 and his Ph.D. in Chinese Religion in 1971 from the University of Chicago Divinity School.

Dr. Overmyer began teaching in the Department of Religion at Oberlin College, Ohio, in 1970. After three years, he moved to the University of British Columbia. Since gaining tenure there in 1977, Dr. Overmyer has served as professor in U.B.C.’s Department of Asian Studies and the College.

Dr. Overmyer has served as visitor at Princeton University in 1993, the University of Heidelberg in 1993, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong from 1996 to 1998. His outstanding service as both teacher and administrator earned Dr. Overmyer a U.B.C. Killam Faculty Research Prize in 1986, election as a fellow in the Royal Society of Canada in 1988, and a Killam Faculty Teaching Prize in 2000. He is also a member of the American Society of the Study of Religion.

Dr. Overmyer’s research has focused on Chinese popular thought, religion, and culture; popular religious sects of the late traditional and modern periods and their texts; and local rituals and beliefs practiced in villages. He has published extensively in the form of books, articles, book reviews, and conference papers, offering important new ideas to scholarship in East Asian Studies. His first book, Folk Buddhist Religions: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China (Harvard, 1976), was awarded the American Council of Learned Societies Prize in 1979 for “the best first book written by an historian of religions in the last three years.” In 1986, he published his second book, The Flying Phoenix: Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan, coauthored with David K. Jordan (Princeton, 1986), and an introductory textbook written for first-year university students, Religions of China: The World as a Living System (Harper and Row, 1986). More recently, he has published Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Harvard, 1999). In addition to writing, Dr. Overmyer has served on the editorial boards of China Review International, the Journal of Chinese Religions, Contemporary Chinese Studies Series (U.B.C. Press), Minsu quyi (a journal of Chinese folk drama, literature, and religion), and Ching Feng. He was also the founding editor of the Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions from 1976 to 1978, now the Journal of Chinese Religions, published annually at the University of Indiana.

Since his retirement in January 2001, Dr. Overmyer has been working on a new book entitled Chinese Popular Religion in Late Traditional Times (E. J. Brill, forthcoming); he is also editing a conference volume, Ethnography in China Today: A Critical Assessment of Methods and Results (forthcoming in 2002), and a special issue of the China Quarterly, “Religion in China Today.” While working on these and other projects, Dr. Overmyer will conduct research and teach two seminars at the Graduate Institute of Religious Studies of National Chengchi University in Taiwan, from February to July 2002. An international conference, titled “Religious Thought and Lived Religion in China: A Conference in Honour of Professor Daniel L. Overmyer on his Retirement,” will be held in September 2002, at which twenty-two scholars from Germany, France, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Canada, and the U.S. will present papers.

Dr. Overmyer will deliver his Alumnus of the Year address on March 2, 2002, in Swift Lecture Hall.

Community luncheons are held in Swift Common Room on Wednesdays at 12:00 noon.

January 23
“Responding to Evil with Forgiveness” by Jeanne Bishop, Member of the National Board of Directors of Mother Victims’ Families for Reconciliation and Assistant Public Defender with the Office of the Cook County (Illinois) Public Defender.

January 30
Dean’s Forum on François Meltzer’s new book, For Fear of the Fire: Joan of Arc and the Limits of Subjectivity (University of Chicago Press, 2001), a discussion between Lucy Pick, Director of Undergraduate Studies and Senior Lecturer in the History of Christianity in the Divinity School, and François Meltzer, Professor of Religion and Literature and of the Philosophy of Religion in the Divinity School, the Department of

February 6
“Augustine’s Hidden Theology of the Body” by the Rev. Dr. Thandeka, Associate Professor of Theology and Culture at Meadville/Lombard Theological Seminary.

February 13
“Cosmological Physics: What Everyone Needs to Know about the Universe” by Bruce Weinstein, Samuel K. Allison Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Physics, the Enrico Fermi Institute, and the College; also Director of the Center for Cosmological Physics.

February 20
“Comparing Religions—Comparing Lives after 9/11” by William Schweiker, Professor of Theological Ethics in the Divinity School and the College.

Wednesday Community Luncheons
Mark Krupnick Retires from the Faculty

Mark Krupnick, Professor of Religion and Literature in the Divinity School, the Department of English Language and Literature, and the Committee on Jewish Studies, retired at the end of the winter quarter 2002. He was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease) last spring. A.L.S. is a neurodegenerative disease that causes the withering of all voluntary muscles. It has no known cure and is ultimately fatal. Because Professor Krupnick’s type of A.L.S. has begun to affect the muscles in his mouth and throat, his capacity for clear verbal articulation has been diminished to the extent that teaching would prove extremely difficult. In his retirement, Professor Krupnick hopes to finish a book about changes in sensibility and orientation among Jewish-American writers and intellectuals of the past half century. A celebration was held in his honor on February 7 in Swift Common Room at which students, colleagues, and friends gathered to offer their reflections on his tenure at the Divinity School and on his important contributions to scholarship on modern American literature, Jewish-American writing, and twentieth-century literary theory and criticism. Those who wish to contact him are invited to do so via his secretary, Sandy Crate, at (773) 702-7449, or scrate@uchicago.edu.

Bruce Lincoln Receives Honorary Doctorate

Bruce Lincoln, the Caroline E. Haskell Professor of the History of Religions, received a Doctor Philosophiae Honoris Causa from the University of Copenhagen at its Annual Commemoration Day on November 15, 2001.

Martha Nussbaum Wins Grawemeyer Foundation Award

Martha Nussbaum, Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics, has been awarded the annual University of Louisville’s Grawemeyer Foundation Award for her book Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education (Harvard University Press, 1997). The award committee draws nominations from around the world with the intent to honor individuals from the humanities, the social sciences, and the performing arts who have developed great ideas that are broadly accessible and not restricted to academic discussion. Professor Nussbaum will donate the $200,000 award to charity.

Announcing the John E. and Jessica A. Gaus Fund

The Divinity School is honored to announce the John E. and Jessica A. Gaus Fund, which was established to provide scholarships to Divinity School students whose studies enlarget and enrich understandings of Global Christian Unity in different periods of Christian history and in various regions of the world, in consonance with Jesus’ prayer of John 17:21. Preferential consideration in selection of students to receive scholarships is to be given to those who come from underdeveloped countries and who are fluent verbally and in writing at least one internationally spoken language in addition to English.

Building Renovations

By the end of the autumn quarter, installations were completed in room 208, the Divinity School’s first “smart” classroom. Equipped with two JBL speakers, a level stereo mixer, a stereo audio amplifier, an interface panel, an LCD projector, a projection screen, a multistandard VCR, and a DVD player, the classroom will be used by faculty members and student groups with multimedia needs. Other building renovations include the installation of a new carpet and drapes in Swift Lecture Hall, the primary venue for Divinity School public events.

February 27

“Why Should We Study Albert Schweitzer?” by James Carleton Paget, Lecturer in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, England.

March 6

Music by the Middle Eastern Jazz Ensemble.

SPRING QUARTER 2002

March 27

“Seeing is Believing: The Openness for Religious Questions in Film” by Tom Gunning, Professor in the Department of Art History and the College.

April 24

“Who You Live with Matters: Families, Households and Health” by Linda Waite, Professor of Sociology in the Social Sciences Collegiate Division.

May 1

“The Failure of Modern Political Theology” by Mark Lilla, Professor in the Committee on Social Thought and the College.
DON BROWNING is the Alexander Campbell Professor of Religious Ethics and the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago Divinity School and Director of the Lilly Project on Religion, Culture, and Family. At the end of 2001, Professor Browning retired from the Divinity School after thirty-five years of service on the faculty. He is spending 2001–02 as the Woodruff Visiting Professor of the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion at the Law School of Emory University.

CIRCA: In your time at the Divinity School you have explored religion and psychology, practical theology, and ethics and the social sciences. Do you see a common thread between these three fields? What links them in your mind, and how have you been able to contribute to them?

DB: The Ph.D. I earned at the Divinity School in 1964 was in an area called Religion and Personality. I studied mostly systematic theology, psychology, and psychotherapy, which gradually led me to become interested in how psychology was shaping our image of the human. I wanted to know how it might be similar to and different from certain classical religious perspectives, especially those from the West, which have more or less informed our image of who we are, as well as shaped much of our contemporary culture and convictions about human nature. Within the discussion between religion and psychology, it seemed to me that the more practical or concrete the issue was, the more interesting the question was. This led me into the so-called field of practical theology. Starting with existential questions that we all face—family, economics, sexuality, disease, human pain, human suffering, and so forth—you have to go back and try to understand them in light of theology as well as history. Only with this background can you reconfront the concrete questions.

During this circle of exploration, I soon realized that most of the interesting issues raised were ethical. So from religion and psychology, followed by a foray into practical theology, I eventually discovered the question of the relation of ethics to the social sciences. I have found these three seemingly disparate fields to be related and totally organic. My contribution to each has been to relate one to another in trying to grapple with concrete questions.

CIRCA: The Family Project is a decade old and has produced numerous books, conferences, and even a documentary film. What is your perspective on the Project and how do you think it has made an impact?

DB: The Religion, Culture, and Family Project has brought the three faces of my work together. While it has paid a lot of attention to theology, theological ethics, and the history of the family, it has also paid significant attention to the social sciences. It is concerned with such major issues as, How do you understand what is happening with regard to the family? How do you understand what is happening to people—mothers, fathers, and children? How do you understand what we're gaining and what we're losing with regard to social health by virtue of certain family transformations? How do you even set about defining such a complex problem? The Project has attempted to grapple with these questions in a variety of different ways, three of which follow:

In its summary book, From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate (Westminster/John Knox, 1997, 2003), the Project used in-depth case studies and national surveys to develop nineteen proposals for the creation of a new family ethic, half of them directed at churches, the other at society and government.

In the recently published Renewing the Social Tapestry: Toward a Public Philosophy and Policy for Families (W. W. Norton, January 2002), the Project brings these ideas to the center of American public policy discussions. Written for a conference held in September 2000 by the American Assembly—a Columbia University think tank that for fifty years has worked on controversial issues facing American life—the book contains in the appendix a consensus statement that sixty leaders in American life put together to determine a viable public policy for families in America.

On February 14, 2002 (St. Valentine's day), PBS aired the Project's first documentary, "Marriage: Is It Just a Piece of Paper?" The film attempts to analyze the meaning behind contemporary marriage practices, including the proliferation of marriages that end in divorce and the rising phenomenon of out-of-wedlock births, and what all this signifies for American society. It has been the Project's most successful way to date of garnering public attention.

With each of these efforts, the Project has tried to open new perspectives, providing what we hope will be a useful orientation to a variety of concrete issues. Not everything that we've done has had such direct influence. We've also written several, more historical pieces, all of which are referenced on the Project's website (http://divinity.uchicago.edu/family).

CIRCA: The documentary, like the Family Project, has been a source of controversy. Can you explain why?

DB: The Project has been bold enough to say that society is paying a price for increased family disruption, and that we need to work actively to change the direction of this trend. The social sciences offer a lot of support to this claim. For example, Linda Waite and two other Chicago social scientists were recently given seven million dollars to study loneliness. What is the flip side of loneliness? Relationships. Why are marital relationships more stable than other kinds? Because, Linda argues, people make public commitments, and huge sources of support come in public accountability structures. But as soon as we talk about marital relationships, people want to know what constitutes one? Suddenly, the question on everyone's mind becomes that of gay marriages. As soon as you take a stand on a hot-button issue like gay marriage or abortion, that is all people remember. It gives them an excuse not to ask other questions, such as, Are fathers important? Should we be concerned that children are born out of wedlock? Our strategy has always been to...
Divinity School Winter and Spring Events

WINTER QUARTER 2002

Conversations in Divinity with Bernard McGinn
Thursday, January 30
4:30 P.M., Swift Lecture Hall

History of Religions Lecture
Wednesday, January 16
4:00 P.M., Swift Common Room
"The Road to Kandahar: A Genealogy of Jihad in Modern Islamic Political Thought" by Roxanne Euben, Associate Professor of Political Science at Wellesley College and author of Enemies in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism (Princeton University Press, 1999).

Theology Club Lecture
Tuesday, January 22
4:30 P.M., Swift Lecture Hall
"Screening Belief" by distinguished theologian Mark C. Taylor, Churt Professor of Humanities at Williams College.

A Call for Reckoning: Religion and the Death Penalty
Friday, January 25
All day public conference, Swift Lecture Hall
See "Report from the Pew Forum" under Marty Center News and Events, this issue.

SPRING QUARTER 2002

Ethics in a Time of Turmoil
Friday, April 5–Saturday, April 6
All day public conference, Swift Lecture Hall
In the wake of the tragedy of September 11, the Eighth Annual University of Chicago Graduate Students Ethics Conference will be devoted to the role of ethics in a time of turmoil. The conference’s theme is intentionally broad in order to encourage a diversity of student presentations. Panels will be convened around the following topics: comparative ethics, postmodern ethics, reconsiliation, responsibility of public intellectuals, political ethics, discourse ethics, philosophical ethics, just war theory, globalization, ethical responses to history, Islamic philosophy, feminist ethics, and environmental ethics. For more information, please write to Liz Bucar, Student Ethics Committee on Social Thought.

A Lecture by Oliver Davies
Wednesday, May 1
4:00 P.M., Swift Lecture Hall
"On Divine Creativity: Word and Eucharist" by Oliver Davies, Reader in Systematic Theology at the University of Wales at Lampeter.

Alumnus of the Year 2001 Award Ceremony
Thursday, May 2
4:00 P.M., Swift Lecture Hall
Address by Daniel L. Overmyer, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Asian Studies and the Centre for Chinese Research at the University of British Columbia and Honorary Professor on the Faculty of Arts at Shanghai Normal University.

For calendar updates, please check the Divinity School website at http://divinity.uchicago.edu.
The 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 wider society. In all of its projects, the Marty Center ought to serve as a robust “circulatory system” that strengthens and extends scholarly inquiry by moving it through faculty, student, and public bodies of deliberation.

—W. Clark Gilpin, Director of the Marty Center

Doing Justice to Mercy: Contemporary Problems and Prospects for Criminal Justice April 12–13

Developed out of the Public Theology Workshop under the auspices of the Martin Marty Center, “Doing Justice to Mercy: Problems and Prospects in Criminal Justice” will take place from April 12 to 13, 2002, at the Divinity School. The objective of the conference is to contribute to the quality of public debate on current understandings of criminal justice by examining critically the role of justice and mercy at both theoretical and practical, domestic and international levels. To achieve this goal, conference organizers are inviting scholars from varying disciplines as well as practitioners and activists to stimulate capacious conversational. Confirmed conference participants so far include: Carol Steiker (Harvard Law School), Marc Mauer (The Sentencing Project), Mark Kline Taylor (Princeton Theological Seminary), David Little (Harvard University), Lois Lively (McCormick Theological Seminary), Albert Alschuler (University of Chicago Divinity School), Lois Livezey (McCormick Theological Seminary), William Chambliss (University of Chicago Divinity School), and Kathryn Tanner (University of Chicago Divinity School).

For more information about the conference, please visit the Marty Center’s website (http://marty-center.uchicago.edu).

Family Project Documentary Aired on PBS

The Religion, Culture, and Family Project Documentary, “Marriage: Is It Just a Piece of Paper?” was shown on all three hundred PBS stations in the country on Valentine’s Day, February 14, 2002. The documentary, written by journalist Barbara Dafos Whitehead and narrated by Cokie Roberts, addresses the decline of marriage and what this means for society. Mixing the voices of “real people” with national experts, including William Julius Wilson, Judy Wallerstein, William Doherty, William Galston, John Witte, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Patricia Ireland, Diane Sollie, Governor Frank Keating, and Senators Lieberman and Brownback, the film tries to suggest that marriage is a positive force in society but that it must be reformed before it can be revived. A book with the same title as the documentary has just been published by William B. Eerdmans Press (February 2002). To obtain copies of the book or the documentary, please consult the Family Project’s website (http://divinity.uchicago.edu/family/).

The Religion, Culture, and Family Project, funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., is based at the University of Chicago Divinity School and conducts research into the religious dimensions of historical and contemporary family issues.

Report from the Pew Forum

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, cochaired by Jean Bethke Elshtain in Chicago and E. J. Dionne in Washington D.C., promotes deeper reflection upon religion’s influence on matters of public life. In the fall, the Forum’s Chicago office hosted a consultation among dozens of leading religious and divinity schools from around the country. Discussions focused on key issues at the intersection of theological education and civic life, and dealt especially with how theological and pastoral training equip new ministers for their roles as civic and moral leaders in their communities. The Forum is preparing a report that summarizes the central themes and proposals emerging out of these lively conversations.

In January, the Divinity School hosted a major conference entitled “A Call for Reckoning: Religion and the Death Penalty.” Over five hundred people assembed in Swift Hall to hear distinguished jurists, political leaders, and scholars of religion, politics, and law discuss the religious dimensions of capital punishment. Arguments for and against continued use of the practice were taken up by prominent speakers, including Avery Cardinal Dulles, Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, and former Illinois senator Paul Simon. The forum staff, which includes John Carlson, Eric Elthinan, and Erik Owens, edited and published a conference reader for the event. It will turn its attention to an edited volume of the conference proceedings in the spring.

For more information about the Pew Forum and its activities, please visit its website (http://www.pewforum.org).

The 2002 Brauer Seminar

This year’s Brauer seminar will be led by Tikva-Frymer Kensky, Professor of Hebrew Bible and the History of Judaism, and David Tracy, Andrew Thomas Greeley and Grace McNichols Greeley Distinguished Service Professor of Catholic Studies and Professor of Theology and of the Philosophy of Religion. The seminar, “Constructive Biblical Theology,” will explore the issues involved in developing a constructive biblical theology that both embraces the enormous complexity of the Hebrew Bible and serves the contemporary progressive religious world. What is the role of scripture in a contemporary theology that does not consider scripture an authority that determines the content or mode of faith? What is the significance of scriptural story no longer viewed as history? How can a scripture whose ethics seems flawed to modern eyes still be sacred? How do incoherence and indeterminacy, essential characteristics of the theology of the Hebrew Bible, serve as the basis of contemporary theology and/or spiritual life? The focus of the seminar will be on hermeneutical approaches and original constructive thinking in addition to learning the leading contemporary biblical theologians.

The Brauer Seminar, established in 1991 to advance interdisciplinary dialogue in the academic study of religion, is funded through the generosity of friends of the late Jerald C. Brauer, Naomi Shenstone Donnelly Professor Emeritus of the History of Christianity and former dean of the Divinity School.

New Marty Center Website Launched over Winter Break

The new Marty Center website was launched in early January 2002. The site houses information about the Center—its history and purpose; it offers a directory of staff and fellows; information on how to apply for fellowships; descriptions of the various faculty research projects sponsored by the Center; news about upcoming conferences, including an archive of past conferences; and a section on Center publications. We invite you to peruse this site at your convenience (http://marty-center.uchicago.edu) and welcome your feedback.
political structures that govern interaction. It follows that advocacy of the other is the hallmark of this agora, and that acts of advocacy are the sine qua non of this social order and its highest expression. Advocacy, then, becomes understood as both an appropriate moral act, and as a legal-political act of the highest order.

Kelly Hayes is completing her dissertation, “The Politics of Possession: Transvestism and Religion in Brazil.” Hayes begins with the juxtaposition of appearance and reality: the erotically charged sexual culture that markets Rio de Janeiro on the one hand, and the realities of life of one of its most visible classes, the male transvestite (travesti), on the other.

However iconic, they are also controversial within the Brazilian social order itself, and their lives are delineated as much by hardship, disfigurement, and deprivation as they are by glamour and attention. Hayes argues in her dissertation that the combination of allure and threat posed by the figure of the travesti is best understood by examining the relationship between not only sex and gender, but between sex, gender, and the religion found within their communities. Her dissertation is a study of why the travesti population adopts certain religious symbols and practices and ignores others.

Involving both sustained fieldwork in Brazil and extensive investigations in scholarship on ritual, Catholicism in South America, ethnography, and gender studies, Hayes’s dissertation focuses on the relationship between the dominant religion of the region, Catholicism, and such possession religions as Candomble and Umbanda. Precise important inventions: “the interaction of spirits and humans.” Hayes writes, “is described through the sexualized language of penetration. Spirits are said to penetrate the heads of their devotees in the moment of possession, and thus to embody them actively.” In the case of the possession religions, however, “the devotee is sanctioned to speak . . . what otherwise may not be spoken.” It is thus a source of empowerment for those who are otherwise marginalized in the social order, and it is not surprising that women and homosexuals, both male and female, comprise the majority of participants. The story Hayes tells is thus one of a group whose original identity is established by the dominant discourse and fueled by the major religious tradition. But this view is in turn reversed and complicated when the members of the group deploy alternative religious practices that can transform central tropes. To suggest the power of the travesti recourse to possession religions, Hayes quotes a Brazilian congresswoman who observes: “These days in Brazil, everything seems like something isn’t. Everything is relative. Even [the definition of] a woman.” The view of Brazil that emerges from Hayes’s study differs significantly from that of the travel brochures and such films as The Girl from Ipanema.

The view of Brazil that emerges from Hayes’s study differs significantly from that of the travel brochures and such films as The Girl from Ipanema.

The ex-convict is de facto an actual convict—even though the point of a prison sentence is to pay off a debt to society, the debt is never really erased.

Santiago Piñon graduated from the M.Div. program last spring, having completed a senior ministry project entitled “Incessant Surveillance Practices: The Need for a Theology of Punishment.” Ministry students are encouraged to select for these projects a topic that challenges them to correlate critically some dimension of their field experience with their academic study. Piñon accomplished this by drawing upon both his three years of experience at Saint Leonard’s, a halfway house where inmates released from prison are sent to be rehabilitated and assimilated back into society, and his experiences at the Employment Project, a social service agency that seeks to assist these men and women in finding jobs.

Piñon’s immediate and lasting impression from his work is the degree to which the rule governing the lives of such people is once a convict, always a convict. Saint Leonard’s, a location Piñon came to admire, is once a convict, always a convict. Saint Leonard’s, a halfway house where inmates released from prison are sent to be rehabilitated and assimilated back into society, and his experiences at the Employment Project, a social service agency that seeks to assist these men and women in finding jobs. Piñon’s immediate and lasting impression from his work is the degree to which the rule governing the lives of such people is once a convict, always a convict. Saint Leonard’s, a location Piñon came to admire, is once a convict, always a convict.

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Piñon’s immediate and lasting impression from his work is the degree to which the rule governing the lives of such people is once a convict, always a convict.
encourage people to look at these other issues first, then maybe we can shed a more constructive light on the hot-button ones. I think people will look back twenty years from now and ask themselves, Why were we so preoccupied with these issues!

CIRCA: What will you say twenty years from now as you reflect on the Project’s accomplishments?

DB: The Family Project has brought an alternative religious voice into the public discussion. I think we are seen as a major, if not the major, mediator for what I would label a liberal, pro-family religious voice. In twenty years, I am hopeful that the Project will have helped people to grapple successfully with important family issues that we are

Letter from the Dean, continued from page 7

ing vast numbers of options for employment. Their background is always there. The ex-convict is de facto an actual convict—even though the point of a prison sentence is to pay off a debt to society, the debt is never really erased.

For his project, Piñon interviewed and tracked the stories of six residents of the House; he also interviewed extensively other members of the staff. Two of these enormously moving stories follow:

Roy spent time in prison for drug use and theft. Upon completing his sentence, he enrolled in the programs at Saint Leonard’s House and the Employment Project. His performance was so excellent that he subsequently began work on a bachelor’s degree and took a position at an agency helping others on a similar path to get back on their feet. Without question, the program worked for him. Yet he still must cope constantly with his background. Though scrupulous about never hurting anyone and genuinely rehabilitated, he continues to struggle against stereotypes and stigma that, however understandable, render it impossible for him to return fully to society.

Arthur was so traumatized by the show that he went into a downward spiral, using drugs and hiding from everyone. Piñon is sure that he is on a return road to prison in the near future.

Piñon does not claim to have all the answers to these problems. He understands well society’s fears. But in coming to know the traumatic experiences of Roy, Arthur, and others like them, he sees immense surveillance, widely bandied as a social good, running directly counter to the implication that a debt paid is a debt paid. He also sees churches that make the message of the Gospel into a piety that never becomes a practice. Citing Luke 4 and related scriptural material, Piñon notes the emphasis Jesus places on the forgiveness of sins and laments that these messages are not taken seriously.

These are just three of the over three hundred reasons why the Divinity School remains among the most exciting venues around for the study of religion

T heologians, Piñon writes, need to develop a more nuanced understanding of punishment and its purposes. Churches must become more involved in social problems such as the actual rehabilitation of inmates. Ministers must first preach and then lead in the practice of the Gospel and its teaching about forgiveness. Otherwise, he writes, it may always be the case for those who have been in prison that the forgiveness of sins will only happen in heaven.

It is perhaps unsurprising that, with the faculty, I find it relatively easy to locate instances of excellent student research that describe a remarkable range of interest in the study of religion. Whether it is the attempt to articulate a union of moral and legal norms that enables advocacy, the examination of subversive religious practices in Catholic Brazil, or the consideration of the social circumstances of former prisoners—each of these studies takes religion seriously as a social force with tremendous vitality and responsibility in our world. These are just three of the over

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