

# CRITERION

A Publication of the University of Chicago Divinity School



## Dear Alumni and Friends —

Opening this issue of *Criterion* are remarks by Cynthia Gano Lindner, Director of Ministry Studies and Clinical Faculty for Preaching and Pastoral Care in the Divinity School, presented to the Visiting Committee on October 25, 2005. In these remarks Reverend Lindner reflects on the future of ministry in the 21st century.

Next is the Hoover Lecture, given in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Chapel of the Holy Grail at the Disciples Divinity House in Chicago. This lecture, a meditation on “art, the imagination, and the flourishing of common life,” was delivered on October 21, 2005, by Ronne Hartfield.

Following is the 2006 Franz Bibfeldt Lecture, delivered on March 29 at a Wednesday Lunch by James T. Robinson, Assistant Professor of the History of Judaism in the Divinity School. This essay, in the words of Dean Richard Rosengarten, “plumbs the shallows of Bibfeldt’s engagement with the Jewish tradition” and signals a new moment in Bibfeldt studies.

Concluding this issue is a sermon by Ana Porter, 2006 graduate of the Master in Divinity program. This sermon, “Getting Real About Food,” was selected as the 2006 Richard Borden Excellence in Sermons Award first-place runner-up. This annual award from the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations is evaluated on criteria that include describing ways in which Unitarian Universalists can apply their seven principles to better the world, country, communities, and the lives of family, friends, and others.

As always, my thanks to Jeremy Biles, editorial assistant, and Robin Winge, designer.

I hope you enjoy this issue,

**Terren Ilana Wein**, *Editor*

# CRITERION

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Ronne Hartfield is an alumna of the Divinity School who serves on the Advisory Board for the Martin Marty Center.



Ana Porter is a 2006 graduate of the Master of Divinity Program.

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CYNTHIA GANO LINDNER

# Ministry in the 21st Century

Or — The View from Last Sunday Morning

I begin my remarks this evening in good liturgical tradition, with a confession and with “words of assurance.” First the confession: I acquired the hugely ambitious title of this talk because I was not timely in offering up a title of my own devising a few weeks back—and so I would encourage you to be properly skeptical of my ability to accurately forecast the next hundred years in ministry, when I failed to accurately anticipate the title of this presentation just two weeks ago. And now the assurance,

especially welcome for those of you whose thoughts might be wandering towards that truly apocalyptic ritual being played out in Houston as we speak: As the twenty-first century is yet young, so will my reflections on it be brief.

My restraint, though, should be understood in its proper context, which includes the lateness of the hour, the fullness of your day here, the confluence of those other events of national significance, and the limitations of my laryngitic throat. My attempt at brevity should not be construed as any lack of passion on my part about the topic of ministry and its future, nor should it signal any dearth of current literature about the topic. Indeed, the health and well-being of contemporary communities of faith and those who lead them is apparently a topic of great interest among theologians, journalists, and sociologists alike; let me remark on a sample from my own stack of recent acquisitions on the topic of the current status of religious community in America. Despite

the worries of some of my student colleagues, as we were training for ministry here at the Divinity School twenty-five years ago, that God would be irrelevant and the church forgotten before we’d gotten our dissertations done, it seems that the age of reason was not the end of religion after all; indeed, many commentators observe that religious impulses are more pervasive (if less easily categorized) in our twenty-first century: religion’s influence, for good as well as for ill, is still powerful in our world. As sociologist Mark Chaves reminds us in his study of congregations in America, it is yet the case that there are over 300,000 churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples in the United States currently, and more Americans belong to these communities than to any other kind of voluntary association. Religion persists as a significant

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Cynthia Gano Lindner, remarks for the Visiting Committee  
Tuesday, October 25, 2005



... that such communities of believers exist and thrive is still essential  
to the well-being of our larger human project.

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force in this culture and seems poised to continue as such, well into the twenty-first century.

Not surprisingly, while these various authors sound a good deal of agreement about the current state of religious institutions, there is far less agreement about the direction of its ministry in the years ahead. Many writers document the trends that you and I already have experienced or can easily imagine: the modern challenges to traditional forms of authority—personal, scriptural, doctrinal, and institutional—that are presented by cultural, racial, and religious pluralism; the tensions within congregations and denominations heightened by evolving understandings of sexuality and gender identities; and the impact of certain shifts in political, social, and economic power on those institutions—including religious institutions—that have tended to provide validation for these powers-that-be. Researchers remind us that while certain forms of religious community seem to be waning in attendance or influence, new forms are constantly being created—for instance, some of the very denominations which are closing older congregations in record numbers are at the same time starting more new congregations than ever before. Thoughtful observers suggest that while particular congregations and denominations may wax and wane in accordance with their particular cultural representations, the fact that such communities of believers exist and thrive is still essential to the well-being of our larger human project. Following political scientist Robert Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone*, researchers point to the two distinct but complementary kinds of social capital provided by religious communities which seem especially useful in our seemingly fragmented American society: “bonding,” bringing together those of like backgrounds and outlooks to confirm and solidify belief, ethical practice, and identities; and “bridging,” transcending those bonds, so to speak, to seek ties with other segments of society. (See, for example, Larry Witham, in *Who Shall Lead Them: The Future of Ministry in America* [Oxford University Press, 2005].) These writers acknowledge that the forces of cultural change are inevitable and relentless, describe the resulting tensions in great detail, and hint that religious communities have a crucial and unique role to play in negotiating these tensions and changes. They stop short of telling us, however, who might lead these communities of cultural healing

and transformation, and exactly what these communities might look like.

Taking my cue from these authors, I will not offer oversimplified answers or prescriptions for successful twenty-first century ministry, either. There are myriad reasons not to do so—not the least of them being the fact that the answers to that question do not live in me, but in these students we teach, and their students, and theirs, in turn. I was born and educated and practiced ministry primarily in the century that has now passed. My experience of the twenty-first century will be limited to a couple of decades at best. So instead of answers let me offer you a tale of two congregations, a sort of snapshot of Sunday morning in Chicago, and then suggest a metaphor for what ministry has always been, and might yet be, in years ahead. Last Sunday morning, just two days ago, I left my house early, cup of coffee in hand, and traveled the city’s very quiet streets, on my way to hear two of our M.Div. students preach in their respective teaching congregations. The first student, actually, was “on loan,” preaching not in his assigned congregation that morning but in a church nearby, for a small band of worshippers who had made a decision some time back to close their doors and merge with a sister congregation. The service I attended was to be one of their last in that place, and you might imagine some of the sights and sounds, emotions and meanings.

We gathered in a large, gracious sanctuary built just over a century ago in what is now Humboldt Park. We were surrounded by the intricate woodwork which encased elaborate though fading stained glass windows dedicated to the memories of German Lutheran loved ones who had died around the turn of the century. While it was obvious that the building had been erected and maintained for some time with great devotion, pride, and care—the rose-painted walls still sought to match the former brilliance of the stained glass—there was, by now, peeling paint and water damage evident everywhere. The organ was a fine instrument but decidedly out of tune, as were the eight of us—the entire congregation—who raised our voices at the bidding of one of the members whose job it was to announce the hymns. Our disharmony was not surprising, given that there were yards of empty space between each worshipper—for some reason, we’d each chosen an entire pew for ourselves. Even though the unheated

... the familiar gospel story about the feeding of the five thousand encouraged us  
to meet the world at the point of its needs and hungers...

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room was cold, and a huddle would have been smarter and warmer, we were sprinkled, each one to herself, throughout the sanctuary, stragglers and strangers, more a random collection than a community. Our student preached, of course, a fine sermon under difficult circumstances—it is much easier to preach for 8,000 than for eight—and the liturgy of the Eucharist pulled and strained to bond us as one people, a body of Christ—but the language seemed distant, even ironic, as if no one was convinced, as if Jesus himself had already moved on. As we walked down the aisle after the service, an old woman greeted me and thanked me for coming, and then confirmed that hunch, “We’re all gone,” she announced with a sigh, “everyone’s moved away, no one comes to church anymore.” Yet, as we opened the door to the boulevard, it was apparent that this was a highly populated residential neighborhood; families were walking down the sidewalk, children were everywhere. The teaching pastor who had presided at the service told me that a large Latino Pentecostal church in the neighborhood had offered to buy the building, on the condition that, in keeping with their beliefs about representation and their culture’s musical preferences, the stained glass windows and the organ would first be removed. Perhaps this congregation’s bonds could no longer hold here, but the building itself—or at least some parts of it—still spoke, and yet functioned to bridge two centuries, two peoples, two realities.

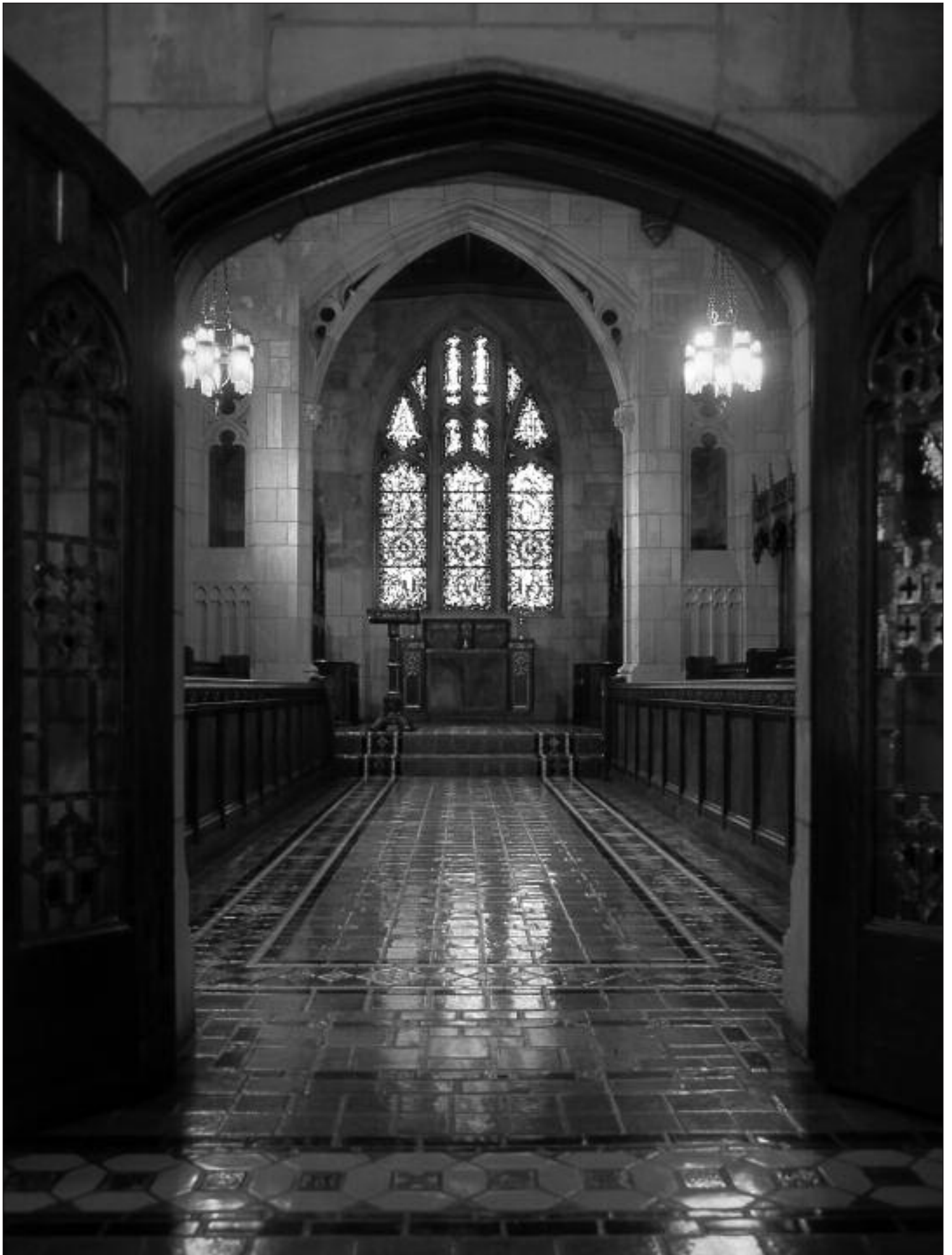
After a few minutes’ drive, about five miles to the south, I reached the second of the students’ preaching engagements, at a Catholic parish in a near west side neighborhood. Mass was just beginning, and the large, recently renovated sanctuary was so full that the parish associate who serves as teaching pastor for another of our students had to direct me to some seats very near the front of the room, where I was surrounded closely by worshippers of all ages. The parish name, and the memorial inscriptions in these stained glass windows, reminds worshippers that this congregation was first conceived as an outreach to French immigrants in Chicago, at about the same time the aforementioned congregation was born, near the end of the nineteenth century. Here, as in Humboldt Park, the surrounding neighborhoods are now home to Latino, Italian, Filipino, and African-American families, and this parish seemed to be embracing this reality. Our Lady of

Guadalupe was now present among the many Marian images on the walls of the sanctuary, and the memorial plaques beneath the recently refurbished windows indicated that Filipino families had joined last century’s French ones in remembering departed loved ones on the walls of this place.

The mass itself was an amalgam of traditions and languages. Some of the liturgy was in English, and then some was in Spanish; we sang some in each language, with some Latin thrown in for good measure, and the Our Father was spoken in several tongues at once. The student, a young woman raised in a large Italian Catholic family near Detroit, read the lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures—in Spanish. The congregation patiently listened as the priest preached, repeating his points first in one language, then the other. Through it all, a lively interpreter signed the entire liturgy for the hearing impaired. Following the service, the congregation was invited to participate in an outdoor procession in which this congregation came together with the folk from the Italian shrine down the block and the congregation from the African-American parish in the next neighborhood. We gathered in a nearby park, a striking collection of ages, cultures, and languages, and processed through the neighborhoods, stopping periodically for scripture readings, reflections, and prayers on behalf of these communities, the neighbors, and all creation. The student intern offered one of the reflections as the crowd gathered on the front steps of her church. She observed that the familiar gospel story about the feeding of the five thousand encouraged us to meet the world at the point of its needs and hungers, and to minister with what we have. The gospel choir from the African-American church preached with her: “Amen and Amen,” they said. On this day, anyway, these congregations seemed able both to bond *and* to bridge—to nourish identity *and* to reach out, to embrace *and* to confront, to cultivate familiarity *and* to respect difference.

*Whose church is this?* It is certainly not the same place that those French immigrants envisioned, a hundred years ago. And I doubt it is the church that the current priest, near retirement now, imagined as he studied in seminary a few decades ago. Nor is it what it will yet be, a hundred years hence. What strikes me as continuous through the decades

Continued on page 24





RONNE HARTFIELD

# Laying Coping Stones in Zion

Art, the Imagination, and the Flourishing of Common Life

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My friends and colleagues, I am honored to have been granted this very special opportunity to be here with you this afternoon to begin a long weekend of celebration and reflection. I want to thank Dean Culp for this most gratefully received invitation and to thank my former Dean, Clark Gilpin, for the loftiest introduction anyone could ask for. What a privilege to celebrate in these next days the life of a magnificent chapel, giving thanks for its origins in the imaginations and commitments of those who laid its foundation

seventy-five years ago. And what a particularly happy time to gather, a time when our city is engaged in wild and joyous celebration of its home baseball team, a particularly delicious *jouissance* for those of us who reside here on the South Side, stubbornly cheering through the decades, never ceasing to imagine a someday—or some-year—victory for our undervalued, often unsung, heroes, our Chicago White Sox. I must say that as a person who walked through the doors of the Art Institute of Chicago for many years, it is a special pleasure to encounter, in an unanticipated representation of art and community spirit, outsize White Sox baseball caps atop the heads of the formidable and iconic lions that guard the museum entrance. Talk about the flourishing of common life! Religion has its place, and so do the arts, but there is no power like a winning team for forging a sense of community.

And what a time to gather as a *community*, in a resolute celebration of life, even as we are assailed by seemingly

unremitting trials and terrors. The world we inhabit together will not allow us to forget other meanings of being human. Our hearts and minds, our individual and collective consciousness are weighted with tragedies that we must live *with*, not alongside of: with fire and flood, war and famine, plague and terror, with the dire implications of failures of leadership afflicted equally by incautious blundering and grave mendacity.

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The Hoover Lecture, given as part of a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Chapel of the Holy Grail at the Disciples Divinity House, October 21, 2005 by Ronne Hartfield. Alumna Hartfield serves on the Advisory Board for the Martin Marty Center and is the author of an historical memoir, *Another Way Home: The Tangled Roots of Race in One Chicago Family* (University of Chicago Press, 2004). She is a member of the Dean's Leadership Council at Harvard Divinity School and an international museum consultant.

## Any encounter with the sacred demands attention. . .

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The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Frank Griswold, who many of us knew well when he served here as Bishop of Chicago, speaking of the New Orleans tragedy, reminds us of what it means to live in community, to grieve not *for* but *with*: “At this time let us be exceedingly mindful that bearing one another’s burdens and sharing one another’s suffering is integral to being members of Christ’s body.” It seems to me that Frank Griswold’s cautionary words address human commonality in Christian terms with far more power than the government’s curious decision to divert federal dollars to reimburse Christian churches for the hundreds and thousands of individual acts of human caring that poured forth spontaneously from communities of faith.

In the midst of trial, we give thanks for those who responded without measure, without forethought, without strategic planning, without any expectation of reimbursement. We give thanks and praise for our common life, we sing and dance and make art that expresses our common human meanings, because, as Pablo Neruda said in his 1972 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, “There is no insurmountable solitude . . . we must pass through solitude and difficulty, isolation and silence, in order to reach forth to the place where we can dance our clumsy dance and sing our sorrowful song . . . for in this dance or in this song there are fulfilled the most ancient rites of our conscience in the awareness of being human and of believing in a common destiny.”

Awareness of that common destiny is a sometime thing. Wondrously, in the midst of geographies of “us” and “them,” of sociologies of the “haves” and the “just plain poor,” the power of image retains the power to cross the barriers that divide us, reminding us of the meanings of the common. A stark photograph from the New Orleans tragedy depicts a marching jazz band, its valiant parade nearly submerged in the city’s terrifying but luminous floodwaters. Of course New Orleans is historically *the* city of jazz, and also historically a city of the most significant floods ever visited upon this continent—and it is New Orleans that has produced one of America’s most inventive contemporary jazz and classical musicians, Wynton Marsalis. A couple of weeks ago, waiting in the dentist’s office, I came across a powerful essay written by Wynton, whom I have had the privilege to meet on several occasions. Entitled “Saving

America’s Soul Kitchen,” this brilliant young trumpeter calls upon our nation to rebuild a community. But not just a *local* community. Listen to what he writes: “This tragedy should make America take an account of itself. It should not allow the mythic significance of this moment to pass without proper consideration. New Orleans can now teach the nation as all are forced by circumstance to literally come closer to one another, because New Orleans is a true American melting pot: the soul of America. A place freer than the rest of the country, where elegance met an indefinable wildness to encourage the flowering of creative intelligence . . . The U.S. should use the resurrection of the city to reacquire its citizens with the *gift* of New Orleans: a multicultural community invigorated by the arts.”

Moved by the message, I tucked the magazine in my bag and took it home with me. Many of my forbears hail from Louisiana, and both my mother and my father grew to young adulthood, separate and unknown to each other, in the rich cultural mix that was New Orleans in the early decades of the last century. We children who grew up later, in the 1940s and ’50s, flourished on the fruits of the gifts of that city, regularly dining on astonishingly creative cuisine and, on a more elevated level, learning the pleasures of free thinking in the atmosphere of New Orleans’ felicitous eclecticism. Reflecting with my siblings on our family’s characteristically Louisianian engagement with an amazing range of ideas and perspectives, we have concluded that the fundamental quality that allowed our large, noisy brood to live together harmoniously was *attention*. We were taught that serious, respectful attention to what we saw, heard, tasted, or created would ensure the appropriate rewards of understanding and mutual respect.

Now I want to move from that very domestic micro-model to a wider discussion of the theoretical concept of attention and its subcategory of respect. From scholars like Pascal and Merleau-Ponty, from Father Nouwens and Howard Thurman, from Martin Buber and Rudolph Otto, from Michael Polanyi and Paul Ricoeur, comes affirmation that this notion of attention is important to the experience of meaning. It is the very heart of religion, and it is as central to art as it is to prayer. Any encounter with the sacred demands attention, as even the avowed agnostic Henri Matisse

## “Now this is *Church*.”

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affirmed when he was designing the interior of the Dominican Chapel at Vence. When questioned as to whether a belief in God was necessary for the building of a sacred space, Matisse answered, “Yes I believe in God—when I am working.” When he was *working*, the quality of his attention was profound, enabling the creation of a structure that is so inhabited by a sense of the sacred that thousands of visitors have described their encounter with it as silent prayer. The Vence Chapel, like other great sacred spaces, outlives both the intention and the lifespan of its earthly designer. As long as the Chapel stands, it beckons visitors into a different, more elevated sense of something at once real and transcendent. The very beauty of the structure actually *prohibits* a lack of attention. Existing as it does in a liminal place, at the boundary of the created and the creator, at the edge of religion and art, Matisse’s great Chapel, like all great art, invites us into a place of spiritual freedom, and an odd kind of inchoate knowledge that one is a part of something larger than oneself.

And so does our little Chapel of the Holy Grail. Whence this sense of sacred communion? Well, in 1832 one F. W. P. Greenwood, Junior Minister at Kings Chapel Boston—the very first Episcopal Church in New England—preached a series of eight sermons about that beautiful place. I believe that much of his wisdom can be applied to our own Chapel, both at its inception and just now. Father Greenwood noted that “Nature and the operations of our own minds will always oblige us to form attachments to particular places . . . and we will continue to make holy places, so long as religious feeling exists, and the worship of God endures.”

The sense of sacred communion comprises, too, something Hans-Georg Gadamer called *Verweilen*, a sort of *tarrying*, an encounter that, without deadline and without immediate goal, allows us to enter and reenter an arena of inherent meaning. In the Black Church, this notion of *tarrying* appears frequently in both spirituals and prayers. We ask that the Lord tarry a while with us, or that we may be allowed to tarry in the holy presence. When that happens, we know that silent harmonious sense of approaching a center where the individual self is transformed, experienced as a part of a much larger whole, whether it happens around a dinner table or in a concert hall, in a completely secular

meeting room with a group bound together by common intention, or sitting in a Chapel. In an attempt to give language to this experience of profound attention, wherever it happens, Black people will say with a nod, “Now this is *Church*.” We join with the Psalmist who has written, “Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house and the place where thine honor dwelleth.”

This weekend we will enter sacred space, and we will rejoice in the place where God’s honor dwelleth. If we are lucky, we will be transformed from a one to a many, from me and you to us, from individual persons to God’s people. That is one way of thinking about the Scriptural prophecy that “Lo He Shall Lay a Stone in Zion.” We know Zion as both a literal and geographic place, and also as a metaphoric place, a place where we come to know that we are a people and that a place has been prepared for us. Scriptural traditions abound with such metaphors—of God as Master Builder, of holy caves carved out by nature and sanctified by human sacrament, of temples built by human hands to image and house the Law, the rock-based foundations of how human life should be lived. Scripture affirms that holy places are necessary as structures that can be *centers* for the flourishing of a meaningful life in community. I am not talking here about churches as community centers, places where singles or seniors can meet together regularly, or where any number of AA or AlAnon or yoga or guitar meetings can be held. It is a wonderful thing when a church can house such balm for so many souls. But those things are really subsets of what I am talking about here, which is a *communitas*, a kind of indivisible, integral mutual co-inherence, a lived and embraced commonality from which all of the other groupings flow and through which they are nourished. When we live in *communitas*, we are a living community of souls who understand themselves as a people in Zion, and our living and being together as a place where everyone has a right place.

Human beings need sacred places. We need them as places where we can worship, singly or together. We need them to help us to understand the call to respect and attend to a multiplicity of human needs, not simply as acts of Christian charity but because our own right place in the world relies upon everyone else being in as right a place as possible.

...our mutual task, as a community of believers,  
is to inhabit our own stony places...

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In the ancient Christian world, where communities were much smaller and more intimate, there was less need to remind citizens of their mutual co-inherence. Peter Brown's engaging treatise on *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* illuminates how concern for the poor was understood not only as a Christian mandate, but as a sound investment in the ongoing health of the community. For us, the Chapel of the Holy Grail is a particular place that we want to inhabit together this weekend, because it makes visible

Our Chapel is an amazing structure. Its stony façade—so balanced, so lovingly and fearfully made—alludes to the promise within. When I first entered its premises, the old silence of it, the sheer formal beauty and order of it, took my breath away. I recognized it as a place that held not only history but strength, and also as a place that contains and conveys a kind of sacred commission. The task is brought before us metaphorically in a strange and beautiful story by Ann Beattie called "Coping Stones." The central character



the authentic co-inherence called for in real Christian life. Alexander Campbell, one of the most significant figures in the history of the Disciples of Christ, affirmed that "all Christian ordinances are but means of grace." We are blessed to have the beautiful Chapel of the Holy Grail as a visible manifestation of grace, because it is grace that gives us the power to respond with full hearts to a holy mandate that is contemporary as well as ancient, to a resounding and demanding commitment to live in communion and in community, with full knowledge that at the heart of beauty there is also brokenness, and that this too demands our attention.

in this story, published in a recent issue of the *New Yorker*, is a middle-aged man who is called upon to rebuild by hand a damaged wall, the boundary between his home and a contiguous cemetery. He begins reluctantly, and finishes the work with the laying of coping stones, meant to assure that his unwilling and careless investment in the repair of nature's damage will sustain. We learn that nature has created more damage than the man can repair. He is ineluctably assailed in equal measure by the slipshod fragility of his stone structure, and by a tragic loss of faith and trust in his only daughter and his only real friend. We learn that the

... we are building upon the coping stones that have  
been laid for us in Zion.

task set before the man is to rebuild his own life, not only the sad little stone wall, and not in spite of, but in the face of the brokenness around and within himself. I would put to you that our mutual task, as a community of believers, is to inhabit our own stony places and work away at the rebuilding of that which is broken, in the sure knowledge that what afflicts you or me is not yours only or mine only, but ours, as human beings in *communitas*. The beauty and strength of our Chapel—of all of our Chapels—is given to and for us as coping stones, whose grace is to remind us that what we build is at once permanent and entirely transient, requiring our attention in full measure.

I wish I could have shown slides today, and I do so much regret the lack of actual visible images for you to see, but I hope you will leave this weekend hungry to look at the real thing. I hope you will haunt museums and art galleries for images like Rodin's overwhelming *Meditation Without Arms*.

—When we engage Rodin's stone carving, this strange, armless human figure, twisted upon herself in a posture somewhere between anguish and prayer, makes visible that we are all at once powerful and powerless, radically dependent and yet imbued with strength and splendor.

—We are reminded, when we stand with astonishment before the cave markings at Lascaux, the oldest works of art we know in the western world, that, like those who scratched their images into the stony walls of a cave, we are all wanting to make a mark for someone to see and decipher.

—We are reminded, when we stand in silent respect at the Gate of No Return at Goree, on the Coast of Ghana, where thousands of human beings were packed into slave ships and sent across the Atlantic Ocean to a world they never imagined, that we are all seeking to create a sign that we have been.

—We are reminded, when we are too frequently wont to dismiss as “primitive” or insignificant the sacred art of some nameless “other,” to recognize Zion in the great fetish stones of China or of Africa or of the Ancient Americas.

—We are reminded, when we are confronted with the strangely mythic stone sculptures of the largely unknown slave artist William Edmondson, that art is made by those who not only believe in God when they are *working* (as Matisse did), but by those humble hands who believe that they can *only* work because God is working through them.

—We are reminded that our little Chapel of the Holy Grail was worth the attention of a small Disciples of Christ congregation and an inspired architect seventy-five years ago so that they might imagine for us a sacred space that would outlive them, where we can, all of us, enter Zion, and find our own place of attention.

I want to close now with a final reminder from Pablo Neruda, for whom all life was saturated with poetry, and for whom sacred attention was a natural state: “A permanence of stone and language upholds the city raised like a chalice in all those hands, live, dead and stilled.” I look forward to raising the chalice with you for our city, for the city of New Orleans, and for all of the broken and blazingly beautiful cities across our small planet, enlightened by the winged chalices that soar across the ceiling of our little Chapel, knowing that we are building upon the coping stones that have been laid for us in Zion. I am grateful for the grace of this weekend, sharing with all of you over these next days the

visible and invisible incarnation of that which binds us not as persons, but as a people, at attention, in singing or in silence. Thank you for all of that. ✕

From left: Cave markings at Lascaux; Rodin's *Meditation Without Arms*; stone sculpture by William Edmondson; the Gate of No Return at Goree.



JAMES T. ROBINSON

# The Argument from Barking Dogs

## Ruminations on Bibfeldt and the Theology of Subaltern Species

I thank Mandy Burton for the honor of addressing you today on this festive occasion, celebrating the oeuvre and legacy of Franz Bibfeldt—the theologian of many hats. I should confess straightaway that I am not a theologian but a historian, and my field is not history of Christianity but history of Judaism. But I have always admired the master’s work, and I welcome this opportunity to consider its importance in my own field. In fact, I think Bibfeldt’s work on circumcision in particular—for me, at least—is especially fruitful (and very close to my heart). I refer (of course) to his cutting-edge exposé “Empathy with the Circumcised.”

As many of you know, this was occasioned by his own accidental circumcision during a youthful duel. In my opinion, this seminal piece of his really uncovered his openness to crossing theological boundaries. It points the way to a truly unencumbered ecumenical discourse.

The material I want to present today concerns Bibfeldt’s transgression of yet another seemingly unbreachable divide: the abyss that separates man and animal. His work in this field—a pioneering effort in eco-onto-theology—led to another important (though curiously overlooked) article entitled: “In Illo Tempore: When Squirrels Spoke.”

### I. Background

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The source of Bibfeldt’s title is something of an enigma. Which squirrels and at what time? Through painstaking archival research, I have discovered Bibfeldt’s source, which I present here for the first time.

In the summer of ’57, Bibfeldt’s path crossed that of our own Mircea Eliade at the Carmelite Center in Paris. Although Eliade’s journal refers to his interlocutor as “Father Bruno,” we know by the initials F.B. that this can be none other than Franz Bibfeldt. I quote from Eliade’s published journal:



“My little dog knows me, therefore I am”— Gertrude Stein

## Dogs bark when they sleep, therefore they dream...

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I think I succeeded in expressing [to Father Bruno, F. B.] what I really felt when the first squirrel had approached my outstretched hand to take an almond. Every time distrust, enmity, the struggle for life, everything that characterizes the relations between man and beast seems to me to be abolished, a powerful and obscure emotion takes over inside me. As if the actual condition of man and of the world were canceled and the paradisiac epoch glorified by the primitive myths were reestablished. Then, *in illo tempore*, before the “Fall,” men lived in peace with the wild beasts; they understood their language and spoke to them as friends. Friendship with animals and understanding their language are both paradisiac and eschatological syndromes. The day the suckling child plays with the viper and the young kid gambols beside the leopard, history will be nearing its end and the Messianic age will be at hand.<sup>1</sup>

♦ ♦ ♦

As we now know, the result of this conversation was epochal for Bibfeldt, who became the unacknowledged father of subaltern studies through his germinal investigation of animal discourse with university professors. Indeed, it can only be to this descent into the abyss, this rupture between human and animal, *hic* and *ille*, that Hilda Braunschweiger-Bibfeldt refers in an undated letter to an unidentified recipient. I cite from Appleby: “Franz has hit rock bottom. . . . He just sits there stroking the dog absently and staring dully into the distance. His speech is that of a babbling idiot.”<sup>2</sup> Even the soul most consonant with that of Franz Bibfeldt wrongly attributed this apparent regression to Bibfeldt’s failed foray into pulp fiction. The real cause of Bibfeldt’s *unheimlich* utterance, we now know, was his *successful* recovery of subaltern speech, his “becoming-animal,” so brilliantly explored in his article “In Illo Tempore.”

But other suppressed subalterns—silent film stars, Hilda Braunschweiger-Bibfeldt, the dead—clamored for Bibfeldt’s attention during the tumultuous ’60s. It wasn’t until the summer of ’70 that Bibfeldt visited the U of C campus and

himself engaged in *illo-tempore* dialogue with non-human interlocutors. It seems he was particularly taken with our parrots. It is a little known fact—this I discovered when foraging through the Regenstein archives—that early that fall, Bibfeldt helped the eminent philosopher Leo Strauss build a sukkah patterned on the parrot nests of Woodlawn Avenue. This, he claimed, was the original “paradisiacal-eschatological” design.

Now to the article itself, or rather to the two footnotes that caught my attention. The first is nothing short of revolutionary: Bibfeldt, due to his uncanny ability to get everything backwards, has unwittingly uncovered a conspiracy in Aristotle’s argument for natural dreams, based on barking dogs—a conspiracy with devastating repercussions for the history of theology. The second footnote is nothing less than a call to deconstruct Scripture and moral tales in search of the authentic animal voice. What this does is open an entirely new reading of the canon.

I begin by interrogating Aristotle’s argument from barking dogs—that famous humanist proof by the arch-speciesist himself.

## II. Aristotle’s Argument from Barking Dogs

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Aristotle’s argument goes as follows:<sup>3</sup>

Dogs bark when they sleep, therefore they dream;  
Prophecy requires reason;  
Therefore dreams are not prophetic.

Bibfeldt’s note stands Aristotle on his head:

Dogs bark when they sleep, therefore they dream;  
Dreams are prophetic;  
Therefore dogs have prophecy.

Now I ask: Is it possible that Aristotle—the very founder of logic—and his apish epigones were ignorant of this conclusion? I think not. What we have here is the bald co-option—by logocentric philosophers—of an archaic tradition of animal religion and piety; the wholesale colonization of the animal *Umwelt*!



...there once was a widespread cult of animal repentance.

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### III. Recovering the Prophetic Voice: Balaam's Ass

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We turn now to Scripture and the most egregious example of all: Balaam's talking ass.

The story is too well known to bear quotation, especially to this learned audience. For those of you who are here only for the beer, I summarize in brief. Balaam, who is on a mission to curse the Jews, is intercepted by the angel of the Lord. But it isn't Balaam who can see the angel; it is his long-suffering and nameless ass. Nameless, perhaps, but not speechless. Master and mount proceed to engage in accusation and defense, until the angel weighs in on the side of the ass.

This is an extraordinary text whose simple reading is clear: prophecy straight from the ass's mouth. But I have yet to find a single exegete who counts this ass among the seers and visionaries of antiquity. Nor did she, like human prophets, have a literary afterlife. There's no pseudographical literature in her name: no Testament of Balaam's Ass, no asinine Apocalypse, no *Ecclesi-Ass-ticus*.

### IV. The Repentant Cows of Nineveh

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Another text explores different evidence. I refer to the repentant cows of Nineveh, commemorated in the book of Jonah. Again, to enlighten those of you whose knowledge of this story only extends to the whale, the reluctant Jonah was sent to Nineveh to call its people to repent. The king of Nineveh, knowing the peculiar constituency of his town, issued an edict to his subjects—humans and non-humans alike. All are called to fast and don sackcloth.

You all know the outcome: God spares Nineveh, Jonah sulks under his gourd because his mission was a success, and God scolds Jonah for not having pity on Nineveh's "more than sixscore thousand" inhabitants, and—as singled out especially by the Holy One, Blessed be He—"also much cattle."

I have examined every medieval Jewish commentary on Jonah, and not one praises the piety of the cows! All merely allegorize what was clearly some embedded reality. But

Bibfeldt, always one step ahead of the zeitgeist, calls on us to learn from this sort of scriptural text. But what?

Here, astoundingly enough, we have not only literary evidence but also material remains. Although you will not see this widely publicized, animal sackcloth has been found in archeological sites, not only in Nineveh but throughout the centers of the ancient Near East. Moreover, traces of animal hair on sackcloth, as well as animal tsitsit and hoof-printed prayer-books, have been found in and around ancient synagogues. Indeed, one of the surprising finds at Qumran is precisely this: remains of one peculiar set of phylacteries—with non-human scriptural texts, to be sure, and boxes made of flax rather than leather. Thus it is quite evident—scholarly resistance notwithstanding—that there once was a widespread cult of animal repentance.

### V. The Tale of the Rooster

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I close with one example that is especially important. I refer to the Tale of the Rooster, a moral tale found in several sources. I limit myself to one thirteenth-century Hebrew version.<sup>4</sup> The story is as follows:

A band of well-heeled urbanites repaired to the country "to revel in fresh flowers and loll in shady bowers." There they met a farmer who put them up, anxious to display his Abrahamic hospitality by "running and returning" with fresh goat milk and a yearling lamb for their repast (the breach of dietary laws should already alert the listener to the questionable piety of the human subjects of this tale).

Next day, the travelers were up for a leisurely tour of the countryside, whose bracing air, as is well known, can really stir up the appetite. As mealtime approached, they returned, famished, to the farmer's table where—lo and behold—they found only a pot of beans. One traveler remarked that he had espied a rooster in the yard that quite whetted his appetite. The obliging host headed for the barnyard, knife in hand. No sooner did he set upon the rooster than the creature began to squawk fortissimo, and escaped to the top of a ladder, from where he recited the first of the

Continued on page 25



PHOTO © GETTY

A N A P O R T E R

# Getting Real about Food

**M**Moses was a rancher. Long before he became a famous biblical patriarch who led his people to freedom from slavery, he was a simple rancher. And this simple rancher was tending his flock on the side of a mountain one day circa 1527 BCE, when he came upon a small forest fire—a burning bush. He was fascinated and awed by this miracle that the bush was burning but was not consumed, neither spreading nor dying. He approached it with some trepidation, and suddenly the voice of God rang out from

the sky, “Moses! Stop right there and take off your shoes, for the ground on which you are standing is holy ground.” How odd for God to tell Moses to *take off his shoes* at a time like this! God was about to tell Moses that he’d be leading the Israelites to freedom. God was about to tell Moses God’s own divine identity. But before *any* of this could happen, Moses’ shoes had to be off.

Whether or not you believe this story to be historically true, it’s a powerful image. As if for Moses to walk on holy ground with the heaviness, clunkiness, and sharp-edgedness of shoes would have been a sacrilege. Moses had to have the humility and intimacy of his bare feet in direct contact with the earth before he could begin his conversation with the divine.

Our sun is a fire that burns like that burning bush. For all intents and purposes, it burns without being consumed. And the light from that great fire travels all the way to earth and gets transformed by green plants into substances that

we can then eat. Plants grow in the ground and they turn sunlight into food that literally becomes our bodies. Surely any ground in which such miracles happen is holy ground. Perhaps we should all be taking off our shoes.

The seventh principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association promotes “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are all a part.” What does the seventh principle mean for us *today*? Our lives don’t occur at the level of epic meaning and biblical tales where the forces of light battle the armies of darkness. Our lives occur in the mundane day-to-day world where things are messy. You have to get your kids to school and you didn’t have time to shovel the driveway yesterday. *This* is the level on which we actually experience our lives. This is the ground level. And likewise, if

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Delivered at the Unitarian Church of Hinsdale, Hinsdale, Illinois, January 8th, 2006.

... these things are only distantly and dimly related to plants  
that once actually grew in the ground.

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we want to make a difference in this world, we can't just theorize about it, we need to take action in a specific, deliberate, and down-to-earth way.

Today I want to get really specific and really concrete: I want to talk about food. I've asked our ushers to pass around collection plates full of corn seeds, otherwise known as popcorn kernels. Please take one and pass the plate. Examine it; roll it between your fingers. Hold it in your palm and imagine the life energy of this tiny, tiny creature.

This sermon is my attempt to "get real" with the seventh principle and at the end of it, I'm going to ask you to get real as well by taking a small, down-to-earth action. So hold on to your corn seed—you're going to need it.

Our relationship to food in this country is a very strange thing. The flavor of a McDonald's French fry doesn't come from the French fry itself but is manufactured separately in a flavor manufacturing plant in New Jersey. But beyond just fast food, almost all the food we eat is manufactured somehow as a product by a corporation. It's kind of a weird thing that the foods that we need to survive are products, like iPods and Toyota Camrys are products. And yet, they are. Even the corn kernel you are holding in your hand is a product. Big-business agriculture in this country is usually not even about growing food directly, but about producing *products* that have to undergo further processing to become food.

I want to read you a quote from an article on agribusiness by Richard Manning in *Harper's* magazine: "America's biggest crop, grain corn, is completely unpalatable. It is raw material for an industry that manufactures food substitutes. Likewise, you can't eat unprocessed wheat. You certainly can't eat hay. You can eat unprocessed soybeans, but mostly we don't. These four crops cover eighty-two percent of American cropland. Agriculture in this country is not about food; it's about producing commodities that require the outlay of still more energy to *become* food."

So most of the food we eat does not arrive directly at our dinner table from a field somewhere. Most of it travels a circuitous route that involves processing and reprocessing, packaging, and being shipped long distances. We eat burgers, ice cream, power bars, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, breakfast cereal with milk, apple pie, spaghetti and meatballs. All of these things are only distantly and dimly related to



plants that once actually grew in the ground.

Most urban and suburban people in this country buy food, all clean and packaged in supermarkets, and have no real sense of connection to food as plant or animal. There is no sense of food as something that was once a living being and is part of the "interconnected web of all existence."

Ironically, the closest many of us come to such intimacy with the natural world is often during the holidays—the one time of year when we buy a whole turkey at the supermarket. It looks surprisingly like a *bird*, minus the head and feathers and feet, of course, but it does kind of look like a bird. And with slight queasiness and uncomfortable jokes, we are forced to deal with it as such. It has blood. It has giblets. At least most supermarkets have the decency to put the giblets in a plastic bag for us so that we don't have to actually touch the bird's gizzard if we don't want to.

How has this dislocation come about and what are its consequences? One of the turning points in our relationship to the land came with the counter-intuitively named "green

The bad news is that we are all complicit in this.

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revolution.” According to Manning, the author of the *Harper’s* article I mentioned, “with the possible exception of the domestication of wheat, the green revolution is the worst thing that ever happened to the planet.”

I want to tell you a story about agriculture in this country. The story goes that in the 1960s the supply of unfarmed, arable land in the U.S. ran out. There was no more “farming frontier.” There were no new fields to be ploughed, no new farms to be started on new land. In a capitalist system that needs constant growth to survive, this was a crisis.

The crisis required a drastic solution and the solution was the modern-day factory farm. Crops are now genetically modified to grow twice their natural size, fields are pumped full of nitrogen fertilizers and pesticides, land that is too dry for the crops we grow is irrigated with water diverted from rivers and lakes far away. Iron is mined and oil is drilled to manufacture and fuel the giant farm machinery that ploughs and fertilizes and harvests the massive acres and acres of monocrops. You can be sure that the farmers who do this work wear shoes.

The amount of fossil fuel energy it takes to accomplish all this is massive. According to Manning, it requires the equivalent of three to four tons of TNT per acre for a modern American farm. Iowa’s fields require 4,000 times the energy of the atomic bomb that devastated Nagasaki.

And here’s the kicker: Today’s food industry spends ten calories of fossil fuel energy for every one calorie of food energy it produces. The waste is staggering. If the whole world ate the way Americans eat, all global fossil-fuel reserves would be gone in ten years.

You’d think that if this were all true it would simply be too expensive to keep running farms this way. You’d think farmers would be going out of business left and right. Well, it *is* too expensive and farmers *might* be going out of business except for the fact that the U.S. government gives subsidies to these giant factory farms to the tune of billions of dollars a year—over the last ten years, \$113,557,000,000.<sup>1</sup> These subsidies have a devastating effect on agricultural markets around the world, and because of this, we’re currently in violation of World Trade Organization standards.

The litany of horrors goes on and on:

- In the Gulf of Mexico, the run-off from nitrogen fertilizers has created a dead zone the size of New Jersey where nothing can live.
- High-fructose corn syrup, one of the main products made from corn, is terrible for you, and the increased production of high-fructose corn syrup since the ’70s tracks exactly with the rise of obesity in this country.
- Eighty percent of our grain gets fed to cows, which are then pumped full of chemicals and raised in horrifyingly cruel living conditions. It takes thirty-five calories of fossil fuel energy to make one calorie of beef in this way.

There’s good news and there’s bad news. I always like getting the bad news out of the way, so here it is: The bad news is that we are all complicit in this. The box of cereal that we all have at home required the equivalent of a quarter gallon of gasoline in its production. It is *our* tax money that funds the subsidies. *We* make the choices to eat the foods that we

But the good news is that insofar as we are all complicit in this,  
there is also hope.

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eat, we vote with our dollars and support the systems create this mess.

But the good news is that insofar as we are all complicit in this, there is also hope. Because we can choose to know that beets don't grow in cans, cows don't grow in burgers, and chickens don't grow in nuggets. We can choose to reconnect with our food and with the people who grow it. We can choose to tread lightly on the holy ground on which we are standing.

But I promised to make this sermon concrete and specific so I'm going to talk about what we can actually do on the ground level to "respect the interconnected web of all existence," in the words of the Seventh Principle. I called up two non-profit organizations that deal with issues related to industrial agriculture and I asked them, what do you recommend that I ask this congregation to do? (Interestingly, both of the people I randomly spoke to were Unitarian Universalists! It was a proud moment.)

Those two people and everything I've read says that the most important thing is this: *buy your food from local, organic farmers*. This is the single most effective thing we can do: exercise our power as consumers. Buy food that's less processed, eat lower on the food chain, eat less meat. This is the most practical way of taking off our shoes as a community.

Every dollar we spend on local, organic food is a dollar that promotes environmentally sound agriculture, protecting our water and air. That dollar supports a family farm and a culture of small, personal businesses instead of giant, faceless corporations. That dollar reduces our dependency on oil. That dollar helps protect animals from extreme cruelty. And that dollar buys healthier, fresher food for our families and ourselves.

So I want to suggest a New Year's Resolution for 2006. And stay tuned, because here's where your corn kernel comes in. I would like everyone in this room to pledge to spend at least \$10 a week on local, organic produce for this year, 2006. Meat counts, too, if it's organic and free-range. Now, in January in Illinois, obviously you can't get local produce, so I'll settle for just organic but not local. But starting in June, there is an abundance of beautiful, delicious produce from organic farms not too far from here. I have info sheets about those farms and how to find their produce in supermarkets, farmers

markets, and by ordering directly from the farms themselves. These sheets are on the table outside.

Here's what our \$10 a week will do: According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average family farm income last year was \$20,663. If this is true, and say that half of the people in this congregation, say 150 people, pledge to spend \$10 a week on local, organic produce. That means that this year, this congregation will put \$75,000 into the pockets of real people, growing food sustainably. This will support the equivalent of more than three farms. Just from our little congregation here.

If you feel that you can make this New Year's resolution of \$10 a week, I ask that you take your corn kernel and put it in this wooden bowl that I will put outside. I will count up all the kernels and let you all know next week how many we have.

In the meantime, may we all practice greater mindfulness in the food we eat and the products we buy. May we find greater and greater respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are all a part. And may we all metaphorically take off our shoes—for the ground on which we are standing is holy ground. ✕

### Source Material

Source material for today's sermon comes from "The Oil We Eat: Following the food chain back to Iraq" by Richard Manning (<http://www.harpers.org/TheOilWeEat.html>)

### Follow-up Note

By the end of the two services in which I delivered this sermon, 116 people (out of about 140) had put their corn kernels in the wooden bowl, representing their pledges to spend at least \$10 per week on local and/or organic produce. If people stick to it, this will add up to \$59,160 this year.

### Endnotes

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1. See <http://www.ewg.org/farm/>

# Alumni News



WILLIAM BEERS, Ph.D. 1989, is the Director of the Department of Spiritual Care at St. Clare Hospital and Health Services in Baraboo, WI. He has published “Fantasy and Mourning: Heterogeneity, Alterity, and Discontinuity in the Pastoral Encounter” in the Fall 2006 *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*.

JOSEPH F. BYRNES, M.A. 1974, Ph.D. 1976, has published *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France* (Penn State University Press, 2005). He is Professor of History at Oklahoma State University.

WILLIAM M. CROSS, M.A. 1951, retired in June of 2005 from Illinois College, where he was Professor of Sociology and Pixley Professor of Social Science. He recently presented at the 25th anniversary meeting of the International Association of Impact Assessments and authored a book review to appear in the *Journal of European Social Policy*.

ANTHONY J. ELIA, M.A. 2004, is the Librarian for Academic Technology at the JKM Library in Chicago, Illinois. He is the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) 2006 Bibliography Grant recipient for his project “Christian Cabala—An Annotated Bibliography.”

MICHAEL EPPERSON, Ph.D. 2003, of the Department of Philosophy, California State University at Sacramento wrote and produced the recent film *The 11th Day*, currently touring the U.S., Canada, and Europe.

GABRIEL FACKRE, B.A. 1948, Ph.D. 1962, is the Abbot Professor of Christian Theology Emeritus at Andover Newton Theological School. He recently published *Believing, Caring and Doing in the United Church of Christ* (United Church Press, 2005).

DANIEL FINN, Ph.D. 1977, recently published *The Moral Ecology of Markets: Assessing Claims about Markets and Justice* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). Finn is President of the Catholic Theological Society of America (as of June, 2006) and Professor of Theology and Clemens Professor of Economics at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

THOMAS F. FREEMAN, Ph.D. 1948, received a Legacy Hero Award at the third annual Texas Southern University Black and White Gala. Now in his 57th year as a full-time tenured

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faculty member, he is also the coach of the award winning TSU Debate Team. Additionally, Dr. Freeman recently celebrated 55 years as pastor of Houston's Mt. Horem Baptist Church.

ALICE M. GREENWALD, M.A. 1975, has been appointed Director of the planned World Trade Center Memorial Museum, at Ground Zero in New York City, effective April 2006. Her previous position was as Associate Museum Director for Museum Programs at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

DAVID HEIN, M.A. 1977, is Professor and Chair of Religion and Philosophy at Hood College. He recently published essays in both the *Anglican Theological Review* and *Mississippi Quarterly*.

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For information on alumni giving and volunteering opportunities, please contact Mary Jean Kraybill, external relations, at 773-702-8200 or [mjkraybi@uchicago.edu](mailto:mjkraybi@uchicago.edu).



LINDA C. MCCLAIN, M.A. 1981, is the Rivkin Radler Distinguished Professor of Law at Hofstra University School of Law. Her book, *The Place of Families: Fostering Capacity, Equality, and Responsibility*, was published by Harvard University Press in January 2006.

MICHAEL MCCOLLY, M.A. 1985, has published *The After-Death Room: Journey Into Spiritual Activism* (Soft Skull Press). This creative nonfiction book blends memoir, reportage, and travel narrative to chronicle the transformative work of AIDS activists, clergy, doctors, social workers, and people living with HIV who are changing public policy, cultural norms, and the notions of spiritual commitment to confront the pandemic. As an HIV-positive writer, McColly travels through Africa and Asia and back to Chicago, reflecting on spiritual activism and the state of the AIDS pandemic in its 25th year.

MARK C. MODAK-TRURAN, M.A. 1988, Ph.D. 2002, was promoted to full professor and named the J. Will Young Professor of Law at Mississippi College School of Law, as of August 2005.

REV. KIMBERLY I. MEINECKE, M.Div. 1997, is the pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Goldendale, Washington. Last November the congregation dedicated its new building, built to replace one destroyed by arson in 2003.

JON PAHL, Ph.D. 1990, has been promoted to Professor. He is now Professor of the History of Christianity in North America at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, whose faculty he joined in 2000. He also adjuncts at Temple University, in the Department of Religion.

NICK PATRICCA, M.A. 1969, Ph.D. 1972, is professor emeritus of theatre at Loyola University Chicago, playwright-in-residence at Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, and artistic associate at Bailiwick Repertory. His play *Oh Holy Allen Ginsberg Oh Holy Shit Sweet Jesus Tantric Buddha Dharma Road*,



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which opened at Bailiwick Repertory in March, has been awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Governor's International Artists Exchange Program. The production will be presented at the Dublin International Gay Theatre Festival in Ireland.

DAVID PERRY, M.Div., 1982, Ph.D., 1993, is Professor of Ethics at the U.S. Army War College. He has been named the General Maxwell Taylor Chair of the Profession of Arms. He teaches courses on ethics and warfare and writes related curricular resources for the College's core courses.

REV. DONNA SCHAPER, M.A. 1971, is now Senior Minister at the Judson Memorial Church in New York City.

REVEREND PETER SCHINELLER, S.J., Ph.D. 1975, is the President of Loyola Jesuit College in Abuja, Nigeria. His previous position was head librarian and professor of theology at Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya.

JOHN G. STACKHOUSE, JR., Ph.D. 1987, the Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology and Culture at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada, has just published his sixth book. Entitled *Finally Feminist: A Pragmatic Christian Understanding of Gender* (Baker Academic), the book offers a new paradigm for espousing feminism while maintaining traditional allegiance to the Bible as divine revelation.

ROBERT WILSON-BLACK, M.A. 1992, Ph.D. 2002, has been appointed Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Moravian College and Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He most recently served as Vice President at the University of St. Francis. Wilson-Black recently completed work as subject editor of the *Dictionary of Modern American Philosophers* (Thoemmes Press, 2005) for which he also authored numerous entries. Before moving their family from Riverside, Illinois, this summer, Rob and his wife, the Reverend Juli Wilson-Black, co-hosted a picnic with their neighbors Harriet and Martin Marty for Chicago-area students of Professor Emeritus Marty.

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## LOSSES

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DR. L. DAVID LEWIS, Ph.D. 1979, died peacefully in his Anderson, Indiana, home on January 11, 2006, after a year-long battle with cancer. A former Anderson University professor, department chairman, and program administrator, he retired in 2004 as president and chief executive officer of Overseas Council International, a global Christian ministry based in Indianapolis.

Dr. Lewis was a 1967 graduate of Anderson College. He earned a Master of Divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary in 1970 and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1979. He was ordained to the ministry of the Church of God in 1971, and served in various leadership positions at churches in Kentucky, Alabama, Florida, Missouri, and Indiana. He joined the faculty of Anderson University in 1978, and for twenty years taught classes in both the Department of Bible and Religion and the Department of History and Political Science. He was an active member of the Church at the Crossing, Indianapolis, where he taught Sunday school and served as chairman of the missions task force.

Dr. Lewis is survived by his wife, Margaret (Watson); a daughter, Dr. Stephanie Williams (Richard) of Denver; a son, Christopher (Sarah) of Indianapolis; grandchildren George Williams of Denver, and Clayton, Jason, and Alexandra Lewis of Indianapolis; a brother, Donald, of Columbia, Missouri; and a sister, Marilyn Moll, of San Antonio, Texas.

Memorial contributions may be sent to the Lewis KIST Development Fund, Church at the Crossing, 9111 Haverstick Road, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240.

## The tools and techniques of ministry have always been multiple and supple...

Lindner Continued from page 5

is that guiding impulse of ministry sounded by our intern on Sunday: Ministry at its most basic and probably its most ingenious level is simply *meeting the world's needs and hungers with the meanings and traditions, the words and the rituals, the resources of compassion and the impulse for justice, that we have*. "New occasions teach new duties," intones a favorite hymn of my childhood church. The particular duties of ministry and even the languages in which it is conducted change as our world breaks apart in different ways. The wanderers, those who are far from home, cut off from power and resources and in need of holy company, may be German and French one generation, African American and Latino the next. In some places the world's need may be for basic sustenance—for food and shelter, education and justice—and at other times, the need is for meanings and visions that can steady, extend, or enliven a community, enact peaceful relationships, transcend our impulses for terror or violence. The tools and techniques of ministry have always been multiple and supple: tradition and story; language and ritual; art, music, and drama; analysis and criticism; hospitality and activism. The church fathers of my Christian tradition catalogued these same resources over a thousand years ago; they endure, and the students preparing for Swift Hall have them in abundance, a rich inheritance from their forebears. The best ministerial education, I think, simply challenges students to take good stock of what they have, understand deeply the needs of the world, and be changed, and changed, and changed again as they seek at once to bind up the people of God and make bridges across the chasms that would tear creation apart, meeting the world at the point of its need.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, most recently, but echoed after each disaster, manmade or natural, over the past many years, there is inevitably a news story, or ten or twenty, about the recurring importance of organized religion in "picking up the pieces." "We didn't have to wait for folks from FEMA," said one New Orleans resident from his cot in a neighborhood church's dining hall, "because the church has always been here." I doubt I could recruit many students to the ministry program if I began to advocate religious

communities as the replacement for dysfunctional government agencies, but there is some truth, I think, behind that evacuee's affirmation.

One of the impulses that brings human beings together in religious community is our deep instinct for holding together the pieces—the transcendent meanings and human values that seem to be pulled apart by the very velocity of our of our living, the simple human community that is so hard to cultivate, in our rush to success or survival or simply the end of the day. When my children were small, we were a Montessori family; all three of them attended a Montessori preschool that was, in the way of many Montessori schools, quite passionate about its beliefs. When we had parent conferences, they were not conferences about the children's progress—it was understood that the children were children, and therefore progressing just fine. The problem was always *parents*, and the fact that we didn't know how to be good ones—and so we were given actual Montessori parent lessons. The most memorable of these was the lesson about dinnerware, in which we were exhorted to put away all that cute and colorful and very *safe plastic* stuff and serve our three- and four-year-olds with our wedding china and the good crystal—not just on special occasions, but all the time. When some of the practical-minded among us protested this foolishness, we were firmly told that learning to be human meant both learning to handle precious things with care, and learning to clean up the mess when we did it badly.

Respecting and representing the fragile beauty of human longings and human meanings and standing willing to repair the brokenness that is evident everywhere around us—perhaps that's enough to say about, and enough to hope for from, ministry in our century or any other. ✕

For humans its message is more than obvious:  
human beings now rule the roost.

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Robinson Continued from page 15

morning blessings: “Blessed art Thou, our Rock, who givest wisdom to the cock.” At this a large crowd joined the astounded travelers and frustrated host.

The cock, spurred on by the audience, began to harangue them: “How dare you make a show to pray, who lie in wait to slay the guiltless every day? . . . Have I not served you selflessly in truth since first I came within the shadow of your roof, waking you the whole night through, that you might offer God His due? . . . But you, with thoughts lewd and crude, would gladly see me skewered. I own no occupation but offering song and supplication, seeking as recompense bare sustenance, chanting my roundelay . . . night and day.”

I will pass over the creature’s arguably self-serving offer to substitute his plump juicy daughters, other than to note that such practice does have biblical precedence.

And what was the outcome of this merited scolding? In the Ur-version, which bears all the signs of being transmitted either by the cock himself or his descendents, the people recognize in the cock the very model of sainthood and take to upbraiding the farmer for his impiety: How dare he lay hands on this wise old sage who wakes them every morning, reminding them of their duty to the Lord? The pious rooster is saved amidst the cheering of the crowds, and thereupon exultantly proclaims “the miracles of redemption and salvation.”

A sad and more common variant of this story, however, ends with the cock in the pot. And it is this spoor, not surprisingly, that is transmitted in the later tradition of the tale.

The tale seems quite charming. But what does it really mean? Or, to use the language of Bibfeldt: What discursive work is it doing? While the *Ur-text* is clearly a work of animal hagiography, orally transmitted for generations of animals, the *spoor-text* is a human text penned with a double message. For humans its message is more than obvious: human beings now rule the roost. But for animals it subversively preserves the message of animal martyrdom for the sake of heaven.

Alas animal religiosity could not withstand the real and ideological attack of *homo sapiens*.<sup>5</sup> It is that robust and confident animal culture that we—with Bibfeldt—seek to rehabilitate. Only then, perhaps, will animal voices ring out again in this post-human world!

A few concluding remarks: It was Bibfeldt’s belief, evident in these two provocative footnotes, that we *can* sniff out alternative theologies, wherever they may lurk. Indeed, it is because of Bibfeldt that we learn the courage to hunt down and dissect the texts of the past, to exploit and explode our ideology at one and the same time. At least this is the lesson I’ve learned from the old master. You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t get her to step in the same stream twice. ✕

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## Endnotes

1. Mircea Eliade, *No Souvenirs: Journal, 1957–1969* (London, 1978), pp. 6–7 [with modifications].
2. R. Scott Appleby, “The Politically Correct Fundamentalism of Franz Bibfeldt,” in *The Unrelieved Paradox: Studies in the Theology of Franz Bibfeldt*, eds. M. Marty and G. Brauer (Eerdmans, 1994), p. 81 [with modifications].
3. See Aristotle, *Prophecy in Sleep*, 463b12 [with modifications].
4. See Judah al-Harizi, *The Book of Tahkemoni*, trans. D. Segal (Littmann Library, 2001), pp. 103–110 [cited and summarized with modifications].
5. For this term, see John Gray, *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (London, 2002).



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