

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 2  
SUMMER 2001

# THE SPIRE

Vanderbilt University Divinity School and Oberlin Graduate School of Theology

A Partnership  
*in Ministry*



Vanderbilt University Divinity School  
invites you to hear author, educator, and social activist

## Parker J. Palmer

deliver the 2001 Cole Lectures:

*Divided No More:*

*Spiritual Formation in a Secular World*

“Principles of Spiritual Formation”

Thursday, October 4, 7:00 p.m.

Benton Chapel

followed by a reception in Tillett Lounge

“Practices of Spiritual Formation”

Friday, October 5, 10:00 a.m.

Benton Chapel

*I felt my life with both my hands*

*To see if it was there—*

*I held my spirit to the Glass,*

*To prove it possibler—*

—from “Poem 351”  
by Emily Dickinson  
c. 1862, first published 1945



*Arms*, from the suite *A Word Made Flesh*, 1994  
by Lesley Dill  
American (born 1950)  
Lithograph and intaglio on tea-stained mulberry paper,  
hand sewn on Arches Buff paper  
30" x 22½"  
1996.176 a-d  
Purchased with funds provided by the Janice Forsythe Memorial Fund,  
with additional support provided by the Vanderbilt Art Association Fund  
Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Gallery Collection  
Courtesy of the artist, represented by George Adams Gallery of New York

When the Leadership Project conducted a 1998 national survey of 11,000 educators and administrators, Parker J. Palmer was recognized as one of the 30 most influential leaders in higher education, religion, and social change. A senior associate of the American Association of Higher Education and founder of the Fetzer Institute's teacher formation program, Parker J. Palmer has inspired a generation of teachers and reformers with his evocative visions of community and spiritual wholeness. He is the author of *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring*, and *To Know as We are Known: A Spirituality of Education*.

Palmer earned his doctorate in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley, and his research has been supported with grants from the Danforth Foundation and the Lilly Endowment.

Philanthropist Edmund W. Cole, president of Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad and treasurer of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust, endowed the annual Cole Lecture Series in 1892 for "the defense and advocacy of the Christian religion." Cole's gift provided for the first sustained lectureship in the history of Vanderbilt University.

# THE SPIRE

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F E A T U R E S

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Summer 2001



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*On the front cover:* To illustrate the ministerial partnership between theological education at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and philanthropic foundations, graphic designer Christian Holihan incorporated architectural appointments representing the three monotheistic religious traditions and the world economy. The image of the hand is an element borrowed from Jewish iconography that symbolizes the voice of God.

*On the back cover:* The cut-paper illustration was created by Cathleen Q. Mumford of the Renaissance Center in Dickson, Tennessee.

# Readers' Forum

## From the Editor

While waiting my turn in a seemingly endless checkout line at the grocery, I decided to amuse myself by perusing the headlines of those sensational supermarket tabloids that shamelessly mock the seven canons of journalism. Pride, combined with a profound fear of being seen in public while holding one of these tracts of yellow journalism, limited my private amusement to viewing only the front-page headlines printed in 72-point bold italic fonts.

Predictions that the apocalypse would occur on the summer solstice and an announcement about the recent discovery in Brazil of the head of John the Baptist, intact, were two of the phenomena that one could read about for \$3. Instead of assuming a posture of righteous indignation at such illogical proclamations, I found myself laughing out loud at these absurd notions while silently lamenting the fact that such publications enjoy a readership and financial success.

The comment from the customer behind me, however, silenced my laughter and shattered any belief that no one would suspect me of paying attention to the rack of tabloids. "Can you believe people are paid to fabricate these myths?" I heard over my left shoulder. Turning to respond, I recognized the interrogator as a reader of *The Spire*.

While we negotiated our carts in increments of two paces, the direction of our conversation changed radically from violations of objective reporting to the contributions the Divinity School's faculty, students, and alumni/ae make to ministry and the academy. "When I finish reading *The Spire*," the fellow reader remarked, "I am always comforted by knowing there are people educated at the Divinity School at work in the world."

In the summer issue, we feature five students who are "at work in the world" by translating their studies at the Divinity School into words and actions which can improve the human condition. After I heard **Herbert Marbury** deliver his paper on sexual violence in the Hebrew Bible at a conference sponsored by the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality and the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on the Black Church, I asked him if he would allow us to publish his argument so that readers could experience not only the depth of his argument but the lyrical prose in which he writes. He graciously consented. One year following her field work in South Africa, alumna **Emily Hardman** presents her perspective on the AIDS crisis on the African continent while current student **Annette Grace Zimondi** of Zimbabwe candidly and courageously recounts the death of her sister, Angie, from AIDS. **Christopher Sanders** analyzes from a theological perspective the intricacies of our government's proposals for faith-based charities. And we are pleased to include a profile of **Becca Stevens**, who was named Nashvillian of the Year by the *Nashville Scene* for her work in the Magdalene project. When I called Becca for an interview, I told her I would need a thirty-minute appointment. Our conversation, however, extended for over two hours, and as I walked across campus to my office, I wondered if I would be able to convey in finite language the ineffable goodness of this woman's character.

Regretfully, we bid farewell to designer Christian Holihan, who is leaving Vanderbilt University Design and Publishing to pursue his career as a musician. Christian's final project was to interpret and illustrate the theme of partnership between theological education and philanthropic foundations, such as the relationship between the Divinity School and the J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation that we feature in this issue. We welcome Christian's successor, Jenni Bongard, and anticipate a productive relationship with her. During the summer, we also have been fortunate to work with editorial assistant and Vanderbilt alumnus Gayle Rogers, who recently was graduated Phi Beta Kappa in English and philosophy. I am also grateful to Joseph Mella, curator of the University's Fine Arts Gallery, and Ljubica Popovich, associate professor of early Christian and Byzantine art, for their artistic guidance in developing this issue. —VJ

### On Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence

Thanks for your sensitivity in telling Sheryl Jaynes-Andrews' story in "Domestic Intervention: Alumnae Alter the Plight of Battered Women." Because Divinity School alumni/ae have circulated the article, we have established contact with victims of domestic violence in Louisiana.

*Earline Doak Kendall*, MA'66, PhD'77  
Professor of the Practice of Early Childhood Education  
Vanderbilt University, emerita  
Cofounder, Financial Resources for Women and Children, Inc.

The article "Domestic Intervention: Alumnae Alter the Plight of Battered Women" is extremely interesting and timely. During my generation, domestic violence was swept under the rug, but I am hopeful that awareness of this serious issue will contribute to solving the problem. Also, the article in memory of Mary Jane Werthan is an appropriate tribute to a remarkable woman who served Nashville above and beyond the call of duty.

*Helene Harmon*  
Nashville, Tennessee

### Remembering Mary Jane Werthan

I especially enjoyed the article about Mary Jane Werthan. She was a dear friend from our days of volunteering at Cheekwood.

*Mona Potter*  
Franklin, Tennessee

### From South of the Border

Thank you for Andrew Thompson's feature "Traversing the Gray Border: Viewing Capitalism Through a Hermeneutical Lens." We really appreciated having the Divinity School students work with us last year, and Andrew's article conveys BorderLinks' mission to see beauty in the midst of suffering and pain and our naïve belief that the world

not only could be, but is becoming a better place. I also was interested in the feature article "Extended Conversations" about Dean James Hudnut-Beumler and the inclusion of the photograph of Don Beisswenger. Both of these men are related to our work at BorderLinks.

*Rick Ufford-Chase*, codirector  
*Lerry Chase*, fundraising  
BorderLinks  
Tucson, Arizona

### In Praise of Student Protesters

While reading Diana Gallaher's article "Witnesses Against Complicity: In Protest of State-Sanctioned Executions" and thinking about the students from Vanderbilt University Divinity School who protested the execution of Robert Glen Coe, I experienced a feeling of sadness mixed with hope. Tennessee's first state killing in forty years caused many of us to go into that deep place within that elicited a response to the call Jesus gave to free the prisoners and show mercy to those facing injustice. The students, and all those who joined them, were the embodiment of Jesus at the gates of the governor's mansion.

*Susan McBride*  
Restorative Justice Ministries  
Nashville, Tennessee

My comments on Diana Gallaher's article "Witnesses Against Complicity: In Protest of State-Sanctioned Executions," are on two fronts—literary and philosophical. Literarily, this is a great article that is well-written, logically ordered, and compelling to read.

Philosophically, I oppose the death penalty, but I have to admit I haven't given the subject much thought, and my academic pondering of the subject would probably be different if it had been my eight-year-old who had been raped and murdered. I can say, however, that I never gave any thought at all to the people who protested the application of the penalty. Diana's article really put a human face on those people for me, and no doubt, for your fellow students and readers. For that, she should be commended for sticking up for what she believes.

She makes an interesting point about the disparate treatment of the students who

were arrested. It's one issue to have varying degrees of community service assessed against people, but if you extrapolate that disparity out to capital murder cases, the conclusions one might draw are disturbing.

*Jim Noles*, attorney  
Birmingham, Alabama

It was with great interest that I read Diana Gallaher's article, "Witnesses Against Complicity: In Protest of State-Sanctioned Executions," in the winter 2001 issue of *The Spire*. The article captured my attention less as the executive director of the Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing and more as an individual immersed in a lifelong struggle to create and to live within a personal ethical framework.

As a lifelong resident of the South, I am no stranger to the significant role of religion in the daily lives of our people; however, I am also no stranger to the lack of critical thinking that most of us apply to our faith. It helps in part to explain why so many southern Christians cling to an uncritical support of the death penalty in spite of the official position against it that most churches espouse. It is this context that makes Diana's article so compelling.

Her argument is a fascinating narrative of one person's search for a way to connect her internal beliefs and values with the social, political, and cultural (physical) world in

which she lives. Beginning with the title's use of complicity (association or participation in or as if in a wrongful act), we are taken on a trip where a defense contractor engineer leaves a lucrative career, heads to divinity school, and embraces social responsibility as a political activist. We are led from the personal world of an uncle who is ill to a historical visit with genocide in Auschwitz and Birkenau. We are guided back to the gates of Tennessee's governor's mansion in resistance to another form of state killing—and then to jail and asked to ponder critically the messaged offered by the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

*The Spire* is truly enlightening as it seeks to lend some of its pages to the Divinity School's history of support for deeply ethical acts against unjust laws. I have always felt that beliefs embraced after passing through the eye of critical judgment are more profound in their personal and social impact than those that never do. Thank you for a story that documents many issues surrounding an emotional public policy, but more so for the personal framework within which the story is told.

*Randy Tatel*  
Executive Director  
Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing (TCASK)

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CELEBRATING 126 YEARS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

# From the Dean

## Sightings Beyond the Classroom

It is said that the best way to assess a person's character is to see what that person does when he or she thinks no one is looking. At Vanderbilt we have a version of that test of character, and it's to see what our students do when there's no grade riding on their actions. By this measure I can report pride in our students. Let me tell you some of the ways I've caught our students unaware this year:

- Every Friday morning when school is in session, the community of scholars—students and professors—gathers for coffee, doughnuts, or bagels and listens to the news about the opportunities developing at the Divinity School. Invariably, one or more of our students announces some means by which our community members might make a difference in the world. This past year our students have dedicated time outside of class to helping teach English to resettled Bosnians, supporting women in domestic violence crises, working with street youth in Nashville, receiving the “Lost Boys” of Sudan into their new homes, and serving as the ground forces for a major international conference on addressing AIDS in Africa.

- As I travel in civic circles in Nashville, I am astounded by how many people associate our students with protest against the reintroduction of the death penalty in Tennessee. But then again, maybe I should not be surprised, for their witness is marked by passion and an unshakable conviction that state-supported revenge killing diminishes us all. Our governor said he thought one of our students “just wanted a little attention.” I think she just wanted to draw attention to how one sin begets another. That's a profound lesson a theological education tries to impart that the world needs to learn again and again.

- In my job as dean I visit a large number of different congregations in a year. Most of the time I discover one of our students is already there teaching Sunday school,

**“No matter what we as professors do in providing lectures and assignments, admitting good people and providing a healthy ethos for their development is a key determinant of our success with graduates.”**

working with youth, or serving as an associate in pastoral visitation. Usually the members of the church can't stop talking about the great student they have from Vanderbilt or expressing their worries about what happens after graduation.

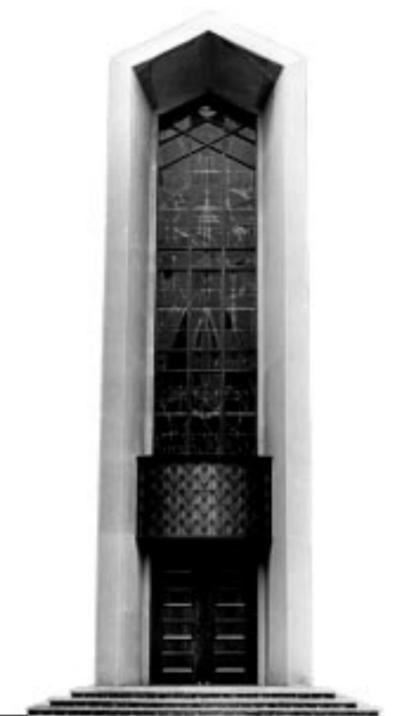
- For the last few years Divinity and Graduate students have held their own baccalaureate service the night before commencement. No professors or administrators have a hand in planning this event. All the grades are in, and the students can do whatever they desire. This year, as in the past, they praised and thanked God for their experiences at Vanderbilt. They also preached, sang, prayed, danced, and played the violin as we'd never before heard them. They had found their own voices as minister theologians, and use those voices they did.

What I conclude from all these “sightings” is that we must be doing something right in the classroom if learning leads to service and witness in so many forms. No matter what we as professors do in providing lectures and assignments, admitting good people and providing a healthy ethos for their development is a key determinant of our success with graduates. The religious commitments that were nurtured in students' lives prior to Vanderbilt have been deepened through study, but they also were deepened by living lives of commitment while they were in school. When our students did not think we were looking, they put their faith into action. And we are grateful for that reflection on the character of Vanderbilt Divinity School.

—Dean James Hudnut-Beumler

Vanderbilt University Press Announces the December 2001 Publication of

# VANDERBILT DIVINITY SCHOOL: *Education, Contest, AND Change* EDITED BY DALE A. JOHNSON



Vanderbilt University Divinity School is one of only four university-based interdenominational institutions in the United States and the only one located in the South. The School's history provides a distinct vantage point for examining theological education since the latter part of the 19th century. Within the 14 chapters of this book, four themes from the School's history emerge:

- engagement with southern culture, present from the beginnings of the University but taking on special significance in the mid-20th century around the issue of race;
- the transition from an institution of the church (Methodist) to an independent and interdenominational school with a liberal Protestant orientation;
- the development of the modern research university, evident in the establishment of a graduate program in religion in addition to the program for the profession of ministry;
- from the 1950s, a growing concern for diversity and inclusivity, in keeping with national and international issues and developments both religious and cultural, which has broadened the Divinity School's sense of ecumenism and deepened the commitment to social justice.

Conflict has played an important part in shaping the history of Vanderbilt Divinity School, from struggles over initial visions to questions of financial support and institutional control, from local debates over academic freedom to national issues of social justice. Especially noteworthy are the transformations the School has experienced since 1960: the “James Lawson affair”—when an African American Divinity School student was expelled for organizing local lunch counter sit-ins—and the implications of his expulsion for the School and the University; the effects of social change on the School since the late 1960s; and the contributions of women and African Americans, including their appointments to the faculty.

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To reserve your copy of *Vanderbilt Divinity School: Education, Contest, and Change*, please contact the office of *The Spire* at 615/322-3981 or at [spire@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:spire@vanderbilt.edu).

# Around the QUADRANGLE

## Mills Honored by AAPC



Liston O. Mills, recipient of the 2001 Distinguished Contributions Award from the American Association of Pastoral Counselors

For his exemplary and inspirational contributions to the ministry of pastoral counseling, Liston O. Mills, the Oberlin Alumni Professor of Pastoral Theology and Counseling, emeritus, has been awarded the Distinguished Contributions Award from the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. He received AAPC's oldest and most prestigious award at the annual conference in April.

"Liston Mills has an immense reserve of respect and admiration," says Divinity School Dean James Hudnut-Beumler. "He is loved by generations of alumni/ae and has mentored some of the School's finest professors and clinicians while advancing the sub-discipline of pastoral theology and care at both local and national levels."

According to the AAPC, Mills' award reflects his longstanding contributions to the ministry of pastoral counseling that continue beyond his retirement from the Divinity School in 1998. Mills began his career at the University in 1962 and was named the Oberlin Alumni Professor of Pastoral Theology and Counseling in 1972.

## A Second Ovation



Julian Bond, a former student of Martin Luther King Jr. and current chair of the NAACP

Julian Bond remembers the first time he spoke at Vanderbilt University 33 years ago following the assassination of the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. "When I finished speaking, I received a standing ovation. Then William Buckley spoke, contradicted every idea I expressed, and also received a standing ovation. I was told that was because Vanderbilt students were polite."

When Bond returned to campus in January to deliver the keynote address for the 2001 Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Lecture Series, he received a standing ovation before he walked to the podium in Benton Chapel and spoke the first syllable of his lecture "2001: A Race Odyssey."

Chairman of the board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization, Bond told his audience, "Today's students are filled with the cynicism and despair of their age and need to learn more about the unknown heroes and heroines who took part in the civil rights movement. By giving voice to the



Kwok Pui-lan, the William F. Cole Professor of Christian Theology and Spirituality at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, delivered the 2001 Antoinette Brown Lecture in March. Following her presentation titled "Engendering Christ," she and student William Young, MDiv2, discussed colonial conceptions of gender and masculinity. The 27th theologian to deliver the Antoinette Brown Lecture, Pui-lan has been hailed as a pioneer in Asian feminist theology and is the founder and adviser of Pacific Asian and North Asian American Women in Theology and Ministry. Named in honor of Oberlin alumna Antoinette Brown Blackwell, the first woman ordained to the Christian ministry in America, the annual lecture-ship was funded originally by benefactor Sylvia Sanders Kelley, BA'54, of Atlanta for the purpose of bringing distinguished women theologians to address the University community. The 28th Antoinette Brown lecture will be delivered on Thursday, March 14, 2002, by Susan Thistlethwaite, president of Chicago Theological Seminary and professor of theology and culture.

hopefulness of earlier generations who faced resistance and oppression my students have never known and will never know, I hope to make heroism more available, more attainable to a generation inclined to see through a glass darkly."

The grandson of a former slave, Bond was elected in 1965 to the Georgia House of Representatives but was prevented from taking his seat. He was seated only after a third election and a unanimous decision of the United States Supreme Court that ruled the Georgia House had violated his rights. Bond currently holds the titles of distinguished professor at American University and professor of history at the University of Virginia.

## Aline Patte Makes the Grade

When she was hired at the Divinity School in 1977 by Dean Sallie McFague, Aline Patte performed her duties as faculty secretary by using an IBM-selectric typewriter on a desk in a windowless cubicle. Instead of leaving the Divinity School during her lunch hour, Aline remained in her office and ate her daily quota of carrots while typing examinations, grant proposals, and professors' book manuscripts. Her skill in the art of details inspired Dean Jack Forstman to promote her two years later to the position of registrar.

As Professor Dale Johnson remarked in his tribute to Aline on the occasion of her retirement, "She transformed the role of registrar from clerical worker to provider of pastoral care. Aline made her work her ministry, and despite the number of times she reminded us she had '10,000 tasks to do,' she never failed to ask students how they and their families were doing and how their relationships with their denominations were developing."

After 24 years of recording grades, posting course descriptions and requirements, editing the catalog, serving as adviser to the Office of Women's Concerns and the Antoinette Brown lectureship committee—while alleviating students' anxieties and encouraging the School's future theologians in their quests—Aline has bid farewell to Room 115 to spend time with her husband, Daniel, professor of religious studies, their children, and grandchildren.

"You have written the book in terms of excellence," Dean James Hudnut-Beumler told Aline as he presented her with a Vanderbilt chair during her retirement luncheon. "For 24 years you have made the grade, and your mark is A+."



Aline Patte, who retired as registrar at the conclusion of the academic year, rocks her granddaughter, Alexandra, in the official Vanderbilt rocking chair she received from the VDS administration, faculty, and staff in recognition of her 24 years of service to the School.

## Shared Wisdom

Divinity School students had the opportunity to read from a collection of 40 rare books and documents exhibited during the spring semester at the Jean and Alexander Heard Library. Sponsored by the Remnant Trust Foundation of Hagerstown, Indiana, the "Wisdom of the Ages" collection featured premiere and early editions of such prominent thinkers as Aristotle, Plutarch, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Desideri Erasmus, John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Milton, and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.

The personal mission of Remnant Trust founder Brian Bex is to place, literally, into the public's hands rare incunabula instead of requiring readers to examine the Great Books through display cases or to conduct

research from facsimiles. "The appearance and feel of an ancient book induces in one a receptive mood of the former generations for whom the texts were written," explains Trust member Kris Bex.

The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center of Vanderbilt University cosponsored the exhibition.

Andrew Barnett, MTS2, of Bowling Green, Kentucky, reads from the first English translation published in 1610 of Augustine's *Citie of God*. On loan from the Remnant Trust's *Wisdom of the Ages Athenaeum*, this volume was among the 40 rare editions available for Divinity School students to research during the spring semester.



# A Partnership in Ministry

## VDS Proposes New Scholarships



Patricia Kyger, BS'59, greets members of the Nashville Catholic faith community before announcing a proposal for establishing scholarships for Catholic students at VDS.

To launch an initiative for establishing scholarships for Catholic students at Vanderbilt Divinity School, over 100 members from the Nashville Catholic faith community convened in February at the residence of University Catholic chaplain James F.X. Pratt, S.J.

Hosted by alumni/ae Patricia Miller Kyger, BS'59, Kent Kyger, MD'58, Mary Jean Horner Ortale, A'51, and William Ortale, LLB'55, the evening's program featured presentations by James Hudnut-Beumler, dean of the Divinity School; J. Patout Burns Jr., the Edward A. Malloy Professor of Catholic Studies; Christine Caron, MTS'92, and doctoral student in ethics; Denise Dudzinski, MTS'93, and doctoral student in ethics; Andrew Barnett, MTS2, and Jill Sawoski, MTS2. The four students discussed with guests the role the Divinity School plays in their intellectual and spiritual formation.



The Most Reverend James D. Niedergeses, D.D., retired bishop of the Diocese of Nashville, and Shirley LaRoche, MTS'98, were among the guests attending the reception for prospective donors to the scholarship initiative.



The Reverend Edward A. (Monk) Malloy, PhD'75, was the honored guest at a reception at the Divinity School when he returned to his alma mater for the spring meeting of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust. The School's endowed chair in Catholic studies is named for Malloy, president of Notre Dame University and one of the first two Catholic priests to earn a doctorate from Vanderbilt. University Provost Thomas G. Burish, (left) who received his baccalaureate at Notre Dame, was among the guests welcoming Malloy to VDS.

Clergy and laity addressed the various responses of religious communities to the rapidly emerging global economy during the Divinity School's spring conference, "God's Economy and the Global Economy: Questions for the Church in the New Millennium." Conducted by Douglas Meeks, the Cal Turner Chancellor's Professor of Wesleyan Studies, the conference began with an act of worship based upon the theme "Voices of Our World" and included two plenary sessions. Among the participants who explored the meaning of "both economies" were Kara Oliver, MDiv'00, prospective Divinity School student Amy Cooper, and J. Thomas Laney Jr., senior minister at West End United Methodist Church.

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## The J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation & Vanderbilt University Divinity School

When Jeanne Thompson Varnell enrolled in Southwestern at Memphis (renamed Rhodes College in 1984) to study the liberal arts, she made a decision that she describes today as "life-enhancing." The college freshman had to choose whether she would fulfill an undergraduate requirement by studying mathematics, Latin, or Greek for two years. Lacking confidence in her mathematical ability and having less-than-fond memories of conjugating Latin verbs in high school, Varnell decided to explore the language of Plato and Sophocles. Her need to satisfy an academic requirement, however, soon developed into an intellectual passion for Greek, the subject in which she would earn her baccalaureate.

"My interest extended beyond learning the mere fundamentals of a classical language," explains Varnell. "Although I never used the degree in a practical sense, studying Greek proved to be a life-enhancing experience because I developed a keen appreciation for the history of Greek civilization, the writings of the philosophers and dramatists, and especially Greek mythology."

Varnell modestly says her study of Greek has been useful primarily in allowing her to understand the allusions to antiquity she may encounter in her eclectic reading, but a comprehensive examination of her life reveals she has used her degree in a practical sense. She is a lifelong advocate for educating people to serve in nonprofit organizations, a strong proponent for advancing race relations, a teacher of conflict resolution skills, and a philanthropist who has supported theological education at Vanderbilt University Divinity School for three decades. Jeanne Varnell's life illustrates her belief in the value of patience, courage, justice, proper ambition, and magnanimity—five attributes from the Table of Aristotelian Virtues she would have studied as an undergraduate at Southwestern.

A native Memphian, Varnell is a board member of the National Civil Rights Museum, a founding member of the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis, and a trustee of Lambuth University in Jackson, Tennessee,

where she was the first woman to serve as chair of the Board of Trust.

As a consultant for Churches in Transitional Communities throughout the southeastern United Methodist Church, chair of the board of the United Methodist Neighborhood Centers, secretary of the Association for Christian Training Service, and an officer in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of Urban Workers Network, Varnell has demonstrated the skills she acquired while studying for her graduate degree in applied behavioral science from Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington. For her master's thesis, she developed a model to help "blended" families—an expression she prefers instead of the more conventional "stepfamily"—adapt to new domestic relationships.

"There will always be conflict in our families and within groups of people, but 'conflict' is not a four-letter word," says Varnell, who has been part of a blended family for 19 years. "If we approach each conflict as a creative opportunity for achieving new understandings, our relationships and our lives are enriched."

Varnell's commitment to enriching the lives of other people is demonstrated also by her roles as secretary and trustee of The J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation—named for her grandfather who founded the food wholesale company of Malone and Hyde—which provides four honor scholarships annually to Vanderbilt Divinity School students preparing for the ministry.

"The Divinity School is a pioneer in educating students to serve congregations and in teaching generations of theologians," contends Varnell. "Students who choose to become ministers do not begin their professional lives by earning large salaries, yet they have to repay their student loans after graduation. We at the J.R. Hyde Sr. Foundation are gratified to know that we are making a difference in the lives of students who are well equipped to serve the church. The School's commitment to critical thinking and field education, the superior caliber of the students, and the support the institution offers to individuals who are pursuing the



On behalf of Vanderbilt University Divinity School and Hyde Scholars, Sandra L. Randleman, JD'80, MDiv'99, (right) paid tribute to philanthropist Jeanne Varnell, secretary and trustee of the J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation. The citation presented by Randleman stated: "In recognition of Jeanne Varnell's support of students preparing for ministry vocations; in celebration of her achievements, steadfast support, and leadership in ministry and the church; and in resolution to perpetuate her example of ministry through professional service and commitment to enriching the lives of others."

ministry as a second vocation are among the reasons why the foundation is pleased to be partners in ministry with the Divinity School and to support programs in which the results are always a notch above the others."

Whether she is advising nonprofit organizations, leading a religious retreat, training volunteers in conflict resolution skills, conducting a workshop for parents of blended families, or spending time with her husband, Henry, her three children, three blended children, and ten grandchildren, Varnell offers "life-enhancing" opportunities for those fortunate enough to know her. The steadfast support and generosity of the J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation ensure that students from Vanderbilt University Divinity School can prepare to serve humankind and perpetuate Jeanne Varnell's tradition of enriching people's lives.—VJ

## Leadership and Philanthropy

BY JEANNE THOMPSON VARNELL

*"Philanthropy and leadership join hands for me in the word chance: a chance to make a significant difference in someone's life, a chance to enhance the quality of life for a specific population, and a chance to empower persons."*

Years ago, a friend introduced me to someone by saying, "Jeanne is a philanthropist."

My reaction was, "No, I'm not; I don't have enough money to be a philanthropist."

Over the years, my understanding has changed. I am a philanthropist—but more importantly, almost anyone can be a philanthropist. Derived from the Greek term *philanthropos*, which translates as "loving people," philanthropy is a desire to help humankind, especially by gifts to charitable or humanitarian institutions. It is benevolence, and all we need to practice philanthropy is a genuine love for humankind that we express through acts of kindness and gifts of money. I am thankful for the multimillion-dollar philanthropists—our world needs them—but the world also needs us—people who are willing to give of their resources for the well-being of all.

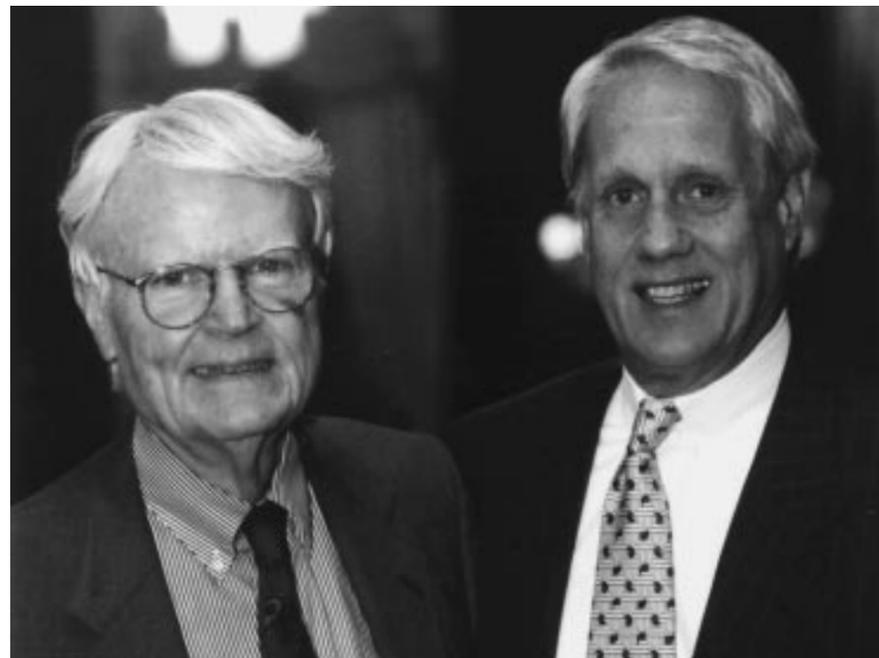
I am reminded of the story of an 87-year-old African American woman. She lived in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and quit school when she was 12 to help the family by washing and ironing clothes. She worked as a washerwoman for the next 75 years and retired in 1994 at age 86 because of arthritis.

The three most important aspects of her life were God, work, and family. She lived simply and saved regularly. In July 1995, the University of Southern Mississippi announced that Oseola McCarty, a washerwoman, had saved \$280,000 over a lifetime and had given \$150,000 of her savings to the university—a school she had never visited. The gift was designated for scholarships to benefit African American students.

Through this gesture that stunned the world, Oseola McCarty became famous overnight. Despite the interviews, appearances on television shows, awards, and accolades—including a presidential medal and an honorary degree from Harvard

University—her character did not change. Those who knew this woman merely said, "She is simply living out her faith in God."

Oseola McCarty explained her action by saying, "When I leave this world, I can't take nothing away from here. I'm old, and I won't live always—that's why I gave the money to the school and put my affairs in order. I planned it, and I am proud of it. I am proud that I worked hard and that my money will help young people who have worked hard to deserve it. I'm proud that I am leaving something positive in this world. My only regret is that I didn't have more to give."



William E. Turner Jr., BA '54, (left) of Merrill Lynch & Company, was among the guests attending the program "Leadership and Philanthropy in the 21st Century" hosted by William S. Cochran, BA '59, managing director of Northwestern Mutual Financial Network.

One of the highlights of my life was meeting Oseola McCarty when she was honored by the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis, an organization of which I am a founding member. She was so humble and genuine, and since her death in 1999 at age 91, she remains an inspiration to countless people.

In *Secrets of Effective Leadership*, F.A. Manske writes, "To me, a leader is a visionary that energizes others. This definition of leadership has two key dimensions: creating a vision of the future and inspiring people to make the vision reality." Oseola McCarty would not have considered herself a leader; however, by Manske's definition, she was an effective leader. She had a vision—a dream to help students—and by acting on this dream, she indeed energized others. Because of her gift, USM had received by the time of her death \$330,000 designated for her scholarship fund. We will never know how many people all over this country and the world were inspired to achieve their dreams.

Sadly, philanthropy does not merely happen. One of the ways that we can exercise our leadership in philanthropy is a willingness to

say, "I care about this; won't you join me in caring and giving?" It may be more comfortable for you to give anonymously, but I have learned over the years how a personal gift can influence others and become a catalyst for subsequent gifts. People don't give to organizations or institutions; people give to people. Even in a brick and mortar gift, you will find a person behind the gift, sharing the vision, and making events happen.

Why is philanthropy important to me? Why do I give? I was trained to give—it is my heritage and was modeled for me in a variety of ways by my family. As an adult, I choose to give as an expression of my faith in God and my commitment to others; I give out of gratitude and because I want to make a difference; I give because it brings me joy.

Philanthropy and leadership join hands for me in the word chance: a chance to make a significant difference in someone's life, a chance to enhance the quality of life for a specific population, and a chance to empower persons. It is vitally important to me that what I give financially reflects how I am investing my time and my life. Also, I believe that it is important to give smartly—that is, I lead with my heart, but I usually let my head review it.

One of my favorite writers, Henri Nouwen, says a grateful life is one in which you receive your gifts from God and then lift them up, trusting that they will multiply. Jesus took five loaves and two fish, lifted them up, expressed grateful recognition of the gifts, and then shared them. After the multitude was fed, there were twelve baskets of food remaining. Gratitude and plentitude go together.

I hope that you will consider giving to the Divinity School. You will discover that your gifts multiply because the School is built on a solid foundation rooted in the Judeo-Christian traditions and committed to excellence while being receptive to diversity and change. The students have wonderfully creative dreams, and as they graduate and begin making differences in our world, your gifts will continue through them. The impact these women and men have in faith communities across the country is beyond a dollar amount.

*(Jeanne Varnell's essay is adapted from a speech she delivered to benefactors, alumni/ae, and guests of the Divinity School on Wednesday, April 11, 2001, at the Hermitage Hotel Ballroom in Nashville.)*

## A Contagious Spirit

As one of the 36 J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation Scholars, I have become part of a tradition of ministry. Just as Mrs. Jeanne Varnell's ministry involves helping novice theologians at Vanderbilt University Divinity School find their voices and their paths, Hyde scholars are able to use the knowledge and skills acquired at the Divinity School to give back to others—whatever ministry they may practice.

As a student in the Divinity School, I continuously have opportunities to listen for my own voice and to question how my ministry will develop. It has been an arduous, painful, yet wonderful process. During my first year at VDS, I was loading airplanes at night for Federal Express and taking classes during the day. Because I was working full-time, I could handle only a half-load of classes. That first year was rough—the Divinity School kept me confused, and work kept me exhausted. I didn't know how to articulate clearly my theological beliefs, and I wasn't quite sure where three years of graduate school would lead me on the career path. I felt as if I were not yet a "real" divinity student and that I hadn't begun to find my place in ministry.

When I received the Hyde Scholarship, however, my life changed dramatically. Not only was I able to reduce my student loan debt, but my peace of mind also increased greatly. I could concentrate more intently on my academic career, and I came to class better prepared to make a positive contribution to my peers' common goal of becoming effective ministers and theologians. Likewise, I was able to discern further my vocational calling by spending time engaging in "practical theology." Because I had my nights free with fewer financial constraints, I had time to volunteer at a halfway house for men in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. This eventually led to a paid internship with the Davidson County Sheriff's Office where I worked in a drug and alcohol treatment center at one of the jails. These experiences have helped me to shape my theological education in a practical way—I can put the ideas I have learned in the classroom to work in the world.

As I listened recently to Mrs. Varnell discuss the importance of philanthropy, I was reminded that receiving the Hyde Scholarship gave me much more than financial assistance and affirmation in my academic career. The Hyde Scholarship has given me a willingness to become a more generous person. Upon meeting Mrs. Varnell in person, I was not only inspired by her down-to-earth attitude about life, I also was inspired by her commitment to philanthropy and her spirit of giving—a spirit that is contagious. I have learned from Mrs. Varnell that one does not have to have millions to become a philanthropist; one simply needs a willingness to give.

Receiving the Hyde Scholarship reminds me of a lesson an Episcopal priest taught me: to whom much is given, much is expected. With the other Hyde Scholars, I look forward to carrying into the world a willingness to give. —Lee Mitchell, MDiv3

*Hyde Scholar Lee Mitchell is a native of Fort Worth, Texas, and received his undergraduate degree in communications from Florida State University in Tallahassee. While completing the master of divinity degree, he also serves as coordinator of the McGill Project, a program designed to stimulate and foster discussion and exploration of philosophical issues between Vanderbilt University's faculty and student residents of McGill Hall. An article by Mitchell based upon his theological field education work in centering prayer with prison inmates will be published in the next issue of The Spire.*



Former and current recipients of the J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation Scholarship had the opportunity to meet benefactor Jeanne Varnell following her speech titled "Leadership and Philanthropy."

### The J.R. Hyde Sr. Family Foundation Scholars

Mr. G. Boyd Chitwood, MDiv'86  
 The Reverend Terry Pence, MDiv'85  
 The Reverend Frederick Edie, MDiv'86  
 Mr. Terry Michael Lavender, MDiv'87  
 The Reverend Kay T. Hereford Voorhees, MDiv'88  
 The Reverend Linda A. Kemp-Baird, MDiv'88  
 Ms. Dorothy Gager, MDiv'89  
 Reverend Dr. Christopher Atwood, MDiv'89  
 John Richard Collier, Esquire, JD'78, MDiv'90  
 The Reverend Becca Stevens, MDiv'90  
 Dr. Richard W. Clark, MDiv'91

The Reverend Judi Hoffman, MDiv'91  
 The Reverend Gay M. Albers, MDiv'93  
 Ms. Ann Dvorak, MDiv'96  
 The Reverend Pam Fickenscher, MDiv'94  
 Mr. Christopher M. Ferrell, MDiv'94  
 Ms. Martha Lyle Reid Ford, BA'84, MDiv'95  
 Ms. Sarah Briggs, MDiv'97  
 The Reverend Ann Soderquist, MDiv'96  
 The Reverend Mark E. Williams, MDiv'96  
 The Reverend Cindy H. Farmer, MTS'92, MDiv'96  
 Ms. Geumhee Cho, MTS'98  
 Ms. Sara D. Lamb, MDiv'97  
 Ms. Patricia Beaumont-Owyang, MDiv'98

Mr. Jamison Fee, MDiv'99  
 The Reverend Tammy Neighbors, MDiv'98  
 Mr. Thomas Willetts Jr., MDiv'98  
 The Reverend Sandra L. Randleman, JD'80, MDiv'99  
 Ms. Kara M. Oliver, MDiv'00  
 The Reverend Becky Jorgensen Eberhart, MDiv'00  
 Ms. Katie Treadway, MDiv'01  
 Ms. Elise Moss Simmons, MDiv'03  
 Mr. Roger Holley, MDiv'03  
 Mr. Lee Mitchell, MDiv'03  
 Mr. Andrew Barnett, MTS'02

# Putting Shoes on the Feet of All God's Children:

## Dinah, Immanuel Kant, & the Question of Duty

BY HERBERT ROBINSON MARBURY, MA'01

*"The Old Testament is devoted to what was right and just from the viewpoint of the ancient Hebrews. All of their enemies were twenty-two carat evil. They, the Hebrews, were never aggressors. The Lord wanted his children to have a country full of big grapes and tall corn. Incidentally, while they were getting it, they might as well get rid of some trashy tribes that he never did think much of anyway."*

—Zora Neale Hurston  
*Dust Tracks on a Road, 1942*

Zora Neale Hurston's tongue-in-cheek critique of the Old Testament shocked yet captivated my theological imagination when I was an undergraduate student. In her statement, I heard words I had yet to hear from any preacher—that the Bible is full of material that we simply don't like. As a young pastor, however, I soon realized that the black church was ready for neither my theological imagination nor Ms. Hurston's interpretations. So then my search began with the question, "What do we do with the most difficult stories of the Bible?"

Arguably, these stories occur overwhelmingly in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible. Replete with vivid images and graphic narratives of sexual violence, most of these stories would offend the most rugged of our moral sensibilities. Even the casual reader is provoked by Old Testament stories of rape, sexual mutilation, and murder as retribution for sexual victimization. The problem is not that the content violates our contemporary aes-



thetic senses. We hungrily consume these same images in the various media expressions of popular culture. The problem is that these stories are not found on the silver screen or in the latest *New York Times* bestseller. Instead, they live in our Bibles. These stories present our heroines and heroes from Sunday school in a most morally reprehensible light.

Because the characters and stories of the Bible have a certain power in Western culture, we simply cannot dismiss them, even when we scholars and clergy would like to do as Martin Luther did and depreciate some of the offensive parts of the text. Rather, our communities call us to engage the personages of the Bible and their narratives seriously.

#### Teaching Troubled Texts

Commenting on the nature of the significance of the Bible in our culture, Frederick Douglass once mused facetiously, “There is a class of people who believes that if a man should fall overboard into the sea with a Bible in his pocket, it would hardly be possible to drown.” In other words, we enter into an intersubjective relationship with the biblical text every time we read these stories. Even as we critique the characters, interpret the meanings, and appropriate the stories as norms for right moral behavior, they in turn critique us, interpret our experiences, and ultimately make powerful and indelible claims upon our lives and our society.

So what do we do with these stories—particularly the stories about sex? In the church, where Christians are at once both terrified of and allured by sex, we maintain a posture of perpetual disconcertedness toward human sexuality. We do not talk about these stories, nor do we preach from these texts, and we certainly do not use them as lessons in Sunday school. Tikva Frymer-Kensky writes that the God portrayed in the Old Testament is ‘gendered’ but has no sexual attributes. Hosea may portray God punishing Israel in the same way that a misogynist husband abuses a wife, but God is not sexual with Israel. Primarily, we do not know how to talk about God and sex at the same time.

One of these difficult stories that has captured my attention is the story of the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34. Biblical theologians rarely give this story much treat-

ment other than to emphasize that its message is to affirm the election of Yahweh’s people over other tribes, explaining the story as a didactic episode in the Heilsgeschichte (salvation-history) meta-narrative. Traditional historical-critical scholars, in many instances, ignore the pericope. Feminist scholars, on the other hand, have given us a fruitful critique by identifying the story’s reinforcement of patriarchy and criticizing the history of androcentric readings that have arisen around it. However, even these very helpful critiques are not meant to offer much that is useful for the practical needs of the church.

I offer what follows as a preliminary response to Kathryn Darr’s very poignant and insightful concerns and suggestions on teaching difficult texts. In her article, “Ezekiel’s Justifications of God: Teaching Troubling Texts,” Darr challenges all of us, who interpret the Bible for scholarly or ecclesial communities, not to shirk the task of wrestling with the complexities of difficult texts. In the backdrop, I attempt, using Immanuel Kant’s ethics, to read the text in a way that seeks common ground with the characters of the story. My hope is that afterwards we might begin a discussion about ways of engaging those stories of the Bible that explicitly beckon the black church to attend to issues of sexual violence and the imposition of sexual silence.

#### Reparation and Subterfuge

Genesis 34 recounts Dinah’s story: Dinah, her father, Jacob, and her brothers, traveling from Succoth, enter into the land of the Hivites. There, a young ambitious Jacob, anxious to build his own legacy outside of Laban’s shadow, purchases land from Hamor, the Hivite King. Sometime later, Dinah, his only daughter, goes out to meet the Hivite women. When she does, Shechem, Hamor’s son, is so smitten with her that he rushes to her, seizes her, and “lay[s] with her by force.” (v.2) In other words, he rapes her.

Dinah’s brothers are incensed by Shechem’s crime. On the other hand Shechem’s father, Hamor, is remorseful about his son’s act and comes to Jacob to make reparation. In order to restore Dinah’s honor (to make her whole again) Hamor proposes to have her marry his son, the prince. To make amends with the family, he offers to pay any bride-price that

Jacob sets. He also suggests that the families intermarry so that the women of the Hivites would be given in marriage to Jacob’s family, and Jacob, in return, would give the women of his family to be married into Hamor’s family.

Jacob responds to Hamor’s offer with silence. However, Jacob’s sons, Dinah’s brothers, are insulted by this arrangement. As we shall see, they have other plans. As a part of their subterfuge, they nonetheless agree to Hamor’s offer on the condition that Hamor, his son Shechem, and all the men of the city undergo circumcision. Dinah’s brothers maintain adamantly that it would be a disgrace for their sister to marry an uncircumcised man. In response to Dinah’s brothers, Hamor and his son agree to be circumcised and convince the men of the city to do likewise.

We soon find that the request for circumcision is merely a ruse. Immediately, the story turns from negotiation to retaliation, and violence spreads far beyond the act of rape. While Hamor, Shechem, and all of the men of the city are writhing in pain and incapacitated from the trauma of circumcision, Simeon and Levi, two of Dinah’s brothers and Jacob’s sons, invade the city, retrieve Dinah, kill Hamor and Shechem, and murder all of the remaining men. The rest of Jacob’s sons follow Simeon and Levi and plunder the city, taking the wives, the children, the livestock, and the valuables.

#### Entering the Text

The narrative immediately makes easy fodder for the insights of a feminist critique. When we as contemporary readers reflect upon Dinah’s story, informed by our own modern and postmodern Western sensibilities, we are left incensed in at least three ways. First, we are outraged by the treatment of Dinah. Clearly, she is objectified and acted upon throughout the story. She is accessed for her physical appearance. She is seized, then raped, then married off, then made a widow, then snatched back. All the time she is spoken for and spoken about, never spoken to—all by men, and we never hear her voice.

Second, we are outraged by the crime itself, the act of rape, because the description never seems to focus on Dinah, her trauma, or her victimization. Even more than this, the act of rape functions to con-

trol her sexuality, rendering her the sexual and gendered other, silent and invisible in a world dominated by men.

Third, just as we are disturbed by the act of rape, we are outraged by the resolutions offered in the story. Hamor proposes that she marry the rapist. The men consider the idea that the families might intermarry, resulting in the commodification of more

*“Even the casual reader is provoked by Old Testament stories of rape, sexual mutilation, and murder as retribution for sexual victimization. The problem is not that the content violates our contemporary aesthetic senses. We hungrily consume these same images in the various media expressions of popular culture. The problem is that these stories are not found on the silver screen or in the latest New York Times bestseller. Instead, they live in our Bibles.”*

women. Jacob’s sons decide among themselves, probably with the tacit consent of their father, that all of the men in the city should be put to death for the crime of one person.

All of these ideas are outrageous to our modern and postmodern senses of morality and proportion. However, as contemporary critics, we must be acutely aware that we are raising questions for Hamor, Jacob, and his sons that they could not possibly have raised for themselves within their own patriarchal context. Our critiques are certainly insightful, but instead of giving us a place where we might enter into a dialogue with the story, they highlight the strangeness of Dinah’s and Jacob’s world to our own. As inquiring exegetes, we are still left to ask when and where we enter into the story.<sup>1</sup>

When contemporary readers and biblical scholars encounter the story’s frustrating impenetrability, it is easier to offer up stock answers than to wrestle with the text for meaning. Darr cautions us not to employ easy strategies such as ‘displacement,’ which she identifies as a way to dismiss the story by appealing to the claim that God’s plan is realized only fully in the New Testament, not in the texts of the ancient Hebrews. She also shuns strategies that simply ignore texts, “setting them outside the perimeters of [one’s] canon within the canon.”

Instead, I would offer, as an entrée into the story, the place just after Dinah has been raped. So often, the black church participates in a story of sexual victimization when someone who has been violated comes to the church seeking wholeness, seeking affirmation, and, as were Jacob’s sons, seeking retribution. At this juncture in the story, just after the rape, it is clear

that all of the parties—Jacob, his sons, and Hamor—recognize that a crime has been committed. They come together to negotiate restoration. As they do so, they are faced with a central question.

The question is Immanuel Kant’s question, “What does duty require of one in any such situation?” Kant, of course, is concerned with how free agents act by reason and not by inclinations such as kinship ties or emotional disposition. In other words, how might an individual employ freedom of choice to act as determined by moral reason? Kant envisioned actions as fully moral when individuals act with respect to duty and without the coercion of laws.

#### Honor, Shame, & Duty

A way of applying Kant’s argument is to suggest that Hamor, Jacob and his sons all struggle with that question. “What does duty require of us to Dinah, the one who has been victimized in our midst?” Their answer is to restore to Dinah and to her family that which has been taken away because of Shechem’s crime. For Hamor it is Dinah’s honor, the family’s honor, and Jacob’s property rights. Having suffered this injustice Dinah is no longer a virgin. She probably would never be married, or her bride-price would now be diminished severely. Hamor is also cognizant of his position as royalty and Jacob’s status as a

poor, but ambitious shepherd. What better honor for a shepherd’s daughter and family than to marry into royalty?

So Hamor offers to have Dinah marry his son, a prince. She would have the all the rights, privileges, and status of royalty. Hamor agrees that Jacob could set the bride-price as high as he would like. In that gesture, Hamor believes he has restored that which has been taken away. For him this is the answer to Kant’s question. He has done what duty has required of him to Dinah and to the family and believes this is just recompense.

Jacob’s sons, on the other hand, believe that Hamor’s offer is sorely inadequate. How dare Hamor think that he could buy their dignity with his wealth and status? In the face of Hamor’s offer they still demand justice. For them, this justice is punishment and retribution. So they trick Hamor and his clan with the offer of circumcision, kill all of the men, and plunder their possessions. For them, this is the answer to Kant’s question. They see their duty as avenging the crime with death. In a culture where shame and honor operate more powerfully than any formal legal system, they kill for their sister, for her honor, for retribution, and for their family’s honor. For them, this is justice.

Like Hamor, Jacob, Simeon, and Levi, contemporary readers also are called to respond to Kant’s question. Yet, our visions of justice, of duty, and of restoration must be altogether different from those in the story because our world is informed by a different discourse. Although our conceptions of restoration are different than those of Dinah’s world, our answer to Kant’s question of duty is the same as Jacob’s and Hamor’s. Kant’s deontological question becomes the site of the fusion of horizons where the church can find common ground with Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Hamor, and Dinah. It is the point at which we might enter the world of the text. In cases of sexual violence, it is our duty in the church to restore to the victim that which has been taken. Yet, when we ask the question about what is destroyed by sexual violence, our answer likely would be informed by the thickest descriptions and insights of modern social science. These give us a better explanation of the losses of the victim and the pathology of the victimizer.

# The Paradox of the Thistle

BY VICTOR JUDGE

*“Loe where a Wounded Heart with Bleeding  
Eyes conspire.*

*Is she a Flaming Fountain, or a Weeping fire?”*

—from “Saint Mary Magdalene” (“The Weeper”)

by Richard Crashaw (1612–49)



*The Reverend Becca Stevens, MDiv'90,  
Vanderbilt University Episcopal chaplain and  
executive director of the Magdalene project*

A black gauze cloth shrouds the crucifix in Saint Augustine's Chapel at Vanderbilt University. Standing at the altar and surveying the rows of empty pews in the sanctuary, Becca Stevens contemplates the sermon she will preach on Good Friday. In her solitude, she ponders whether the language and images she will use to illustrate the central mystery of her faith—the paradox of life from death—will sound hackneyed.

Earlier on this unseasonably warm spring day, the chapel has been filled with mourners attending the requiem of a gentleman whose final request was that his funeral be preached at Saint Augustine's. The deceased also had stipulated that his service be conducted by his spiritual advisor, a cleric who has not always found favor among the local church authorities.

As chaplain of Saint Augustine's Chapel, Stevens unreservedly has honored the wishes of the deceased and quietly assumed the role of concelebrant. Instead of wearing the collar and vestments that immediately call attention to her priestly role, she wears on this occasion an understated black linen dress. This single gesture is a testament of Stevens' character as an unpretentious woman who is not governed by a preoccupation with the external trappings of ecclesiastical authority but by her sensitivity to the feelings of others.

If one were to paint Stevens' portrait at this interval of her life, perhaps the artist would represent her as painter Douglas Chandor depicted Eleanor Roosevelt in 1949. To capture the depth of Roosevelt's character, the portraitist could not be limited by a single, sustained pose of his subject; instead, Chandor created a multi-image portrait of Roosevelt's face and hands. A portrait of Stevens would present the same challenge that confronted Chandor because her hands are constantly engaged in three ministries: the ministry of wife and mother, the ministry of University chaplain, and the ministry of social activist.

For the past six years, her energy as a community activist has been invested in Magdalene, a nonprofit program whose mission is to offer sanctuary and support services to women who have a history of prostitution and chemical dependency. As executive director of Magdalene, Stevens believes that when one woman in a community recovers from the brokenness caused by addiction and sexual exploitation, the entire community

is healed. She lives by the conviction that love and grace are more powerful agents than the forces that motivate women to walk the streets of Dickerson Road, and for her commitment to providing women an alternative to an existence marked by drugs, physical and emotional abuse, homelessness, sexually-transmitted diseases, crime, and jail, the Divinity School alumna was named Nashville's of the Year by the *Nashville Scene*.

When she was graduated from the University of the South in 1985, Stevens remembers “feeling in her gut” that she should devote a part of her life to promoting justice in the world; however, she also felt that she lacked the theological foundation to articulate and to defend her beliefs if she were to lobby against injustice. The cornerstone for that foundation was laid when she enrolled in Vanderbilt Divinity School with the intention of studying theology for one year, but her gut feeling about promoting God's justice soon was accompanied by another idea—presenting herself to the bishop for ordination in the Episcopal church.

## On the Nature of Calling

The fourth daughter of the late Reverend Gladstone Hudson Stevens Jr., an Episcopal priest, and the late Anne Stevens, executive director of Saint Luke's Community Center in Nashville, she earned her baccalaureate in mathematics, Phi Beta Kappa, and left Sewanee for Washington, D.C., where she worked for Bread for the World.

“I asked myself after graduation, ‘If I could make one contribution that would improve the human condition, what is the first step I should take?’, and the answer seemed so obvious—feed the children,” says Stevens. “I had seen hunger in Nashville through my mother's work, and I believed that if the basic need of hunger among children could be remedied, then the other issues in the chain of social ills could be addressed more effectively.”

As an intern with Bread for the World, Stevens took a vow of poverty and lived in community with other individuals committed to alleviating world hunger. Traveling through the Midwest, she visited different churches and encouraged the congregants to establish hunger programs as one of their outreach ministries. Although she was knowledgeable in the intricate legislative processes involved in social work, Stevens believed her arguments against hunger

## When Text and History Intersect

Just as important for the black church as informing our visions with the fruits of the social sciences, our visions also must make use of our own stories; that is, our history of struggle for human fulfillment against the alienation of slavery, slave codes, black codes, jim crowism, segregation and even paradoxically, integration. At the intersection of the text with our own history, we find a point of entry. That history ties us to the struggle of all of those who are alienated in our midst. It challenges and informs our conceptions of justice and parity, made explicit in traditional songs such as ‘I got shoes, you got shoes, all of God's children got shoes.’ Our own stories of dehumanization instruct us that as Hamor and Jacob attempted to restore honor in the historical horizon, we must attend to the question of restoring the personhood or humanity in the contemporary one. For those of us in the black church, that humanity is affirmed, as Karl Barth argued, in Christ Jesus.

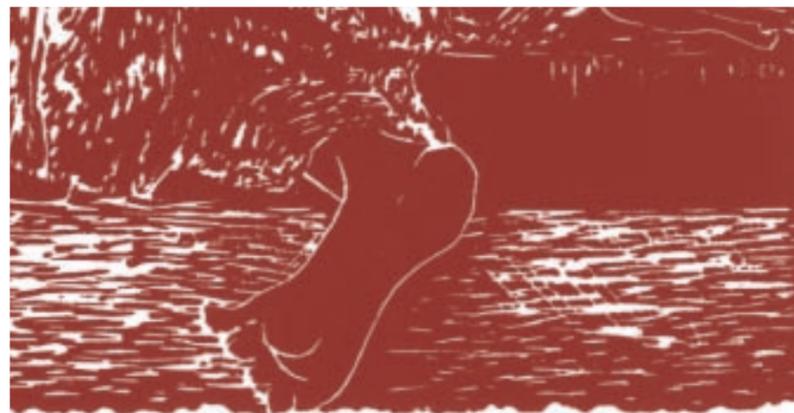
So it is at the place of struggle around the question of our duty to one another that we find common ground with those in the story. Genesis 34 calls us to come to terms with the question, “What is our vision of justice and what does duty require of us to those who have been victimized?” The answer is to use all of the resources within our own context to restore that which has been vitiated by the violence. I think in the black church, we might use this question as a lens through which we consider those who are marginalized in our midst whether because of their gender, ethnicity, or sexuality.

Ultimately, then, Katheryn Darr's challenge is more than compelling and returns us to our formative question, “What do we do with the most troubling texts of the Bible?” We clergy and scholars cannot simply ignore difficult texts, hoping that they fade into insignificance and out of our church lectionaries. In a world where these texts have been appropriated in support of racial discrimination as a part of divine order, rape and misogyny as divine punishment, and homophobia as a posture of righteous piety, we are called to have a stake in the struggle and to raise our voices

in the prevailing discourse. The question of duty challenges us—not only in our encounters with marginalization but also in our interpretations of the text—to become agents of change, restoring justice, putting shoes on the feet of all God's children.

“This, of course, is an adaptation from the well-known speech of African American feminist educator-activist Anna Julia Cooper found her 1892 work, *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman from the South*.

*A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Herbert Robinson Marbury was graduated from Emory University where he earned a baccalaureate in English literature and African American studies before receiving the master of divinity degree from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. An ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, he served as pastor to the Old National United Methodist Church in Riverside, Georgia, from 1992 to 1997. Having earned the master of arts degree at Vanderbilt, Marbury currently is a doctoral candidate in the University's Graduate Department of Religion and a teaching assistant in Hebrew Bible. He is writing his dissertation, Separatist Rhetoric in the Ezra and Nehemiah Corpus, under the direction of Associate Professor Renita Weems.*



The linoleum block print depicting the Hebrew biblical figure Dinah was conceived and created by illustrator Rashida Marjani Browne, MTS'99. Before matriculating at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, she was graduated from Xavier University in Louisiana where she received her baccalaureate in fine arts. A native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Browne teaches drawing and photography in the studio art department at Montgomery Bell Academy, a college preparatory school for young men in Nashville.

*“I am not concerned about debating the unlawfulness of prostitution or whether the police’s latest strategy to deter solicitation on Dickerson Road involves increasing fines and the length of jail sentences. I am concerned more about trying to heal a brokenness that defies legislation by opening an alternate door for a woman who is convinced that love and grace have no place in her life.”*



*In this icon-style representation by the 13th-century Florentine painter identified as the Magdalen Master, Mary Magdalene is depicted as a hermit who stands frontally before the beholder with a banderole in her hand. The inscription translates: “Do not despair if you have sinned. Follow my example and make your peace with God!” Eight scenes outline Mary Magdalene and narrate the most important stages of her life. This painting resides in the Galleria dell’Accademia.*

would be more persuasive if she could discuss justice within a theological context. Inspired by the words of Mohandas Gandhi and the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr., Stevens yearned to be a minister, but also she began to long for a single community where she could work intensively for change instead of the itinerancy that was required of her role in Bread for the World.

Stevens knew if she were to pursue a vocation in the Episcopal church, she first would need to secure permission from the commission on ministry and then seek admission to an Episcopal seminary. During her interview with the commission, Stevens was asked to discuss her calling to religious life. She candidly told the members, “I’m not sure God is calling me; I think I’m calling God.”

Sitting in her office a decade after her ordination, Stevens readily confesses, “I am merely on the tip of the edge of understanding the nature of a calling.”

#### Acquiring a New Vocabulary

Instead of completing applications to Episcopal seminaries, Stevens decided to reside in Nashville, work with her mother at Saint Luke’s Community Center, and enroll at the Divinity School.

“I had designed a careful plan; I would study one year at Vanderbilt and begin to acquire the vocabulary of theology, and then I would matriculate at a seminary,” she says as her serious tone abruptly changes to laughter. “As part of our orientation to the Divinity School, we watched a film on Martin Luther King, and as I was leaving the room, I bumped into this

cute guy, and within the first month, we were studying together and discussing marriage.”

This classmate, who impressed Stevens with his kindness and compassion and insisted that she remain at Vanderbilt, was songwriter Marcus Hummon. The two theology students were married in 1988, and today they are the parents of three sons: Levi, 9; Caney, 5; and Moses, 1.

In her initial year of theological studies, Stevens found herself attracted to the School’s model of minister as theologian but not quite ready to enter the realm of a single denomination. “The incredible gift I received collectively from the Divinity School faculty was the encouragement to find my voice and to question relentlessly for authenticity,” says Stevens. “I learned from David Buttrick that the inherent danger of always preaching from the lectionary was that I might forget to preach the good news of the gospel. And I never read scripture the same way after I saw Walter Harrelson weep as he recounted the Song of Deborah from the Book of Judges. And fortunately, Jack Fitzmier took me down a notch by teaching me not to be so impressed with myself.”

The lesson in humility that Fitzmier imparted to Stevens occurred after the professor of American religious history returned an examination on which she earned a “B+”. She and Hummon had studied together for the test, and when she discovered her future husband had received an “A”, Stevens immediately went to Fitzmier’s office and proclaimed, “I tutored Marcus for that test while he was in the recording studio; he studied from my notes. I made Phi Beta Kappa, and I don’t make bad grades. I cannot have this on my record because it will mess up my plans to become a minister. Why don’t you like me?”

Fitzmier responded to Stevens’ question by asking her a question: “Becca, when is your *real* education going to commence?”

“He invited me into his office and discussed with me how I was creating impediments to learning by having such inflated, unrealistic standards for myself,” remembers Stevens. “He helped me to understand that foremost, I should be in competition with myself, not the person with whom I was in a relationship.”

At the conclusion of the unscheduled tutorial, the humbled student of theology left the professor’s office by offering an apology. “You’re right,” she told Fitzmier. “You can give me a ‘B+’ and I can live with that.”

The grade less than an “A” did not blemish Stevens’ academic record or prevent her from pursuing her vocation. She elected to stay for three years at the Divinity School where she distinguished herself as a Hyde Scholar and fulfilled the requirements for the master of divinity degree. By returning to her alma mater where she studied mathematics, she took graduate courses in canon law and liturgics before earning a certificate in Anglican studies. Stevens would later invite Jack Fitzmier to preach the ordination sermon when she was called to receive holy orders in the Episcopal church.

#### A Vocabulary Made Flesh

The transformative power of grace is a condition Stevens can discuss with experiential wisdom. As executive director of Magdalene, an appointment she assumed, gratis, Stevens witnesses daily the metamorphosis that occurs whenever hope, respect, and dignity are introduced into the life of a woman who personifies degradation and vulnerability.

“Prostitution may be the world’s oldest profession, but women do not have to choose to practice that behavior for their entire lives,” contends Stevens. “I am not concerned about debating the unlawfulness of prostitution or whether the police’s latest strategy to deter solicitation on Dickerson Road involves increasing fines and the length of jail sentences. I am concerned more about trying to heal a brokenness that defies legislation by opening an alternate door for a woman who is convinced that love and grace have no place in her life. Social services are not brain surgery, and there is this myth that enough services are available, yet people are unwilling to avail themselves of the help. But this is what I know: I have never met a prostitute who is not a drug addict, and I never have had a bed that I could not fill because for every ‘door to change’ that is opened, there is someone wanting to cross the threshold.”

The impetus behind Magdalene was a two-year study conducted by representatives of Nashville-Davidson County Metropolitan Government, the criminal courts, law enforcement officials, and members of Nashville’s faith communities. This task force confronted sobering statistics: approximately 300 prostitutes may be found on the city’s streets, and each woman is solicited an average of seven times daily; Nashville ranks second to Memphis in American cities with

the highest rate of syphilis; a prostitute is arrested on the average of seven times a year and serves three months in jail. Upon her release from jail, she has no home, family, or job—she would have to pay \$125 to live in a halfway house—so she goes directly from incarceration to the streets where the drug habit resumes and the wounds of an abusive past are opened. Having no madam who is concerned for her welfare, nor a procurer who requires her loyalty and a portion of her income in exchange for his protection, the most important person in the prostitute’s life is her drug dealer. To satisfy her chemical dependency, she resorts to robbery and violence.

“None of these women got to the streets by herself,” says Stevens. They are victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, abandonment, addiction, and undiagnosed mental illnesses—factors which make prostitution the quintessential women’s issue.”

To help break the cyclical pattern of street life, jail sentence, treatment center, and street life, Stevens and volunteers from Saint Augustine’s Chapel invited five women in 1997 to participate in a long-term residential program where they would find sanctuary from the social and economic factors that motivated them to live as prostitutes. For two years, the women would receive transitional housing and meals, chemical dependency treatment, training in job skills and financial management, tuition assistance, legal support for gaining custody of their children, medical and dental assistance, transportation, and spiritual retreats. The success of the first Magdalene house resulted in establishing a second residence in 1998 and opening the third house in 2000. In four years, 27 women have entered the Magdalene community.

“We’re just not trying to protect these women from a pimp,” explains Stevens. “We’re trying to protect them from a drug dealer who is more of a threat than a pimp.

Magdalene offers the women a haven where the complicated themes in their lives are addressed with compassion and the discipline of a common house rule.”

When a woman elects to enter Magdalene, she does not have to worry about finances, clothing, or transportation. For the first 90 days, she enters a treatment program and receives a weekly stipend of \$60; her primary obligation is to concentrate on beginning the difficult journey to recovery that will enable her to experience a sense of wholeness. “Because their existence has been characterized by day to day survival, the women believe that grace, love, and forgiveness are



*This representation of Mary Magdalene is from a late 14th-century fresco located in the central Italian commune of Pistoia.*

words from a foreign language. We want them to become empowered so they can think beyond the present and eventually return to community as self-respecting, confident, recovering individuals capable of sustaining themselves through employment and trust in human beings.”

Using the model of a sanctuary distinguishes Magdalene from all other women’s recovery projects in the country. Although initial funding came from private donations and revenues raised through the administration of the “John School” for men who have been arrested for solicitation, Magdalene has been awarded status as a 501 (c) (3) agency. Vanderbilt Divinity School, the Owen School of Management, and Alternative Spring Break are among the project’s supporting organizations. In an effort to provide a creative, profitable, and sustainable workplace for residents of Magdalene, the board and staff have begun Thistle Farms, a cottage industry of craft and organic garden products that are created in Saint Augustine’s kitchen.

### The Reciprocity of Healing

While one resident stands over the stove stirring the essential oils for making lavender balm of Gilead, a recent graduate of Magdalene sews a handmade, scented pillow and stitches to the seam a biographical account of a woman who entered the community. Other women pour balsam fir scented candle wax into tins that bear the label Flame of Penuel while a friend prepares rose grapefruit bath salts of Babylon.



Women gathering sage, from A Medieval Herbal, MS Na Lat 1673 f. 343

One can smell the fragrances from such industry each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday as the women of Magdalene make the salves and salts from the herbs they have grown from seedlings. Beginning their day with meditation and prayer, the women ask God to bless their work and to heal them as they make ointments that can soothe the bodies and spirits of others. As the heat from the stove warms the room, the workers talk about the herbs that need to be transplanted to the garden bed, the pumpkins they will harvest for the autumn, and the summer flowers that will become dried bouquets and sold in the winter.

“These women never would have dreamt a year ago that they would be growing herbs, praying in a kitchen, and making candles,” says Stevens as she opens a tin of balm. “But the idea of holding a traditional job can prove overwhelming to a person in recovery, so our vision for Thistle Farms is to provide an environment where the residents can engage in constructive work that will yield a profit dedicated to supporting the three Magdalene houses.”

When asked to explain the significance of the cottage industry’s name, Stevens does not turn to scripture or literary symbolism to defend her answer. “The thistle is the only wildflower that grows on Dickerson Road,” she remarks.

The wildflower familiar to the women of Magdalene is a persistent, drought-resistant, invasive perennial that is difficult to contain—even in the most cultivated gardens—because of the seed’s tendency to become airborne. Like the prickly thistle, prostitution and addiction are forces that can grow anywhere and arrest the lives of the vulnerable.

But Stevens sees a rather paradoxical and redeeming feature in the thistle. The rich purple hue of the wildflower is the same color that will replace the black gauze on Easter Sunday. And she knows that the attributes of the thistle are comparable to the properties of grace—which is also persistent and invasive.

*To learn more about Magdalene, contact the Reverend Stevens by writing to her at Box 6330, Station B, Nashville, Tennessee 37235, or by calling 615/322-4783.*

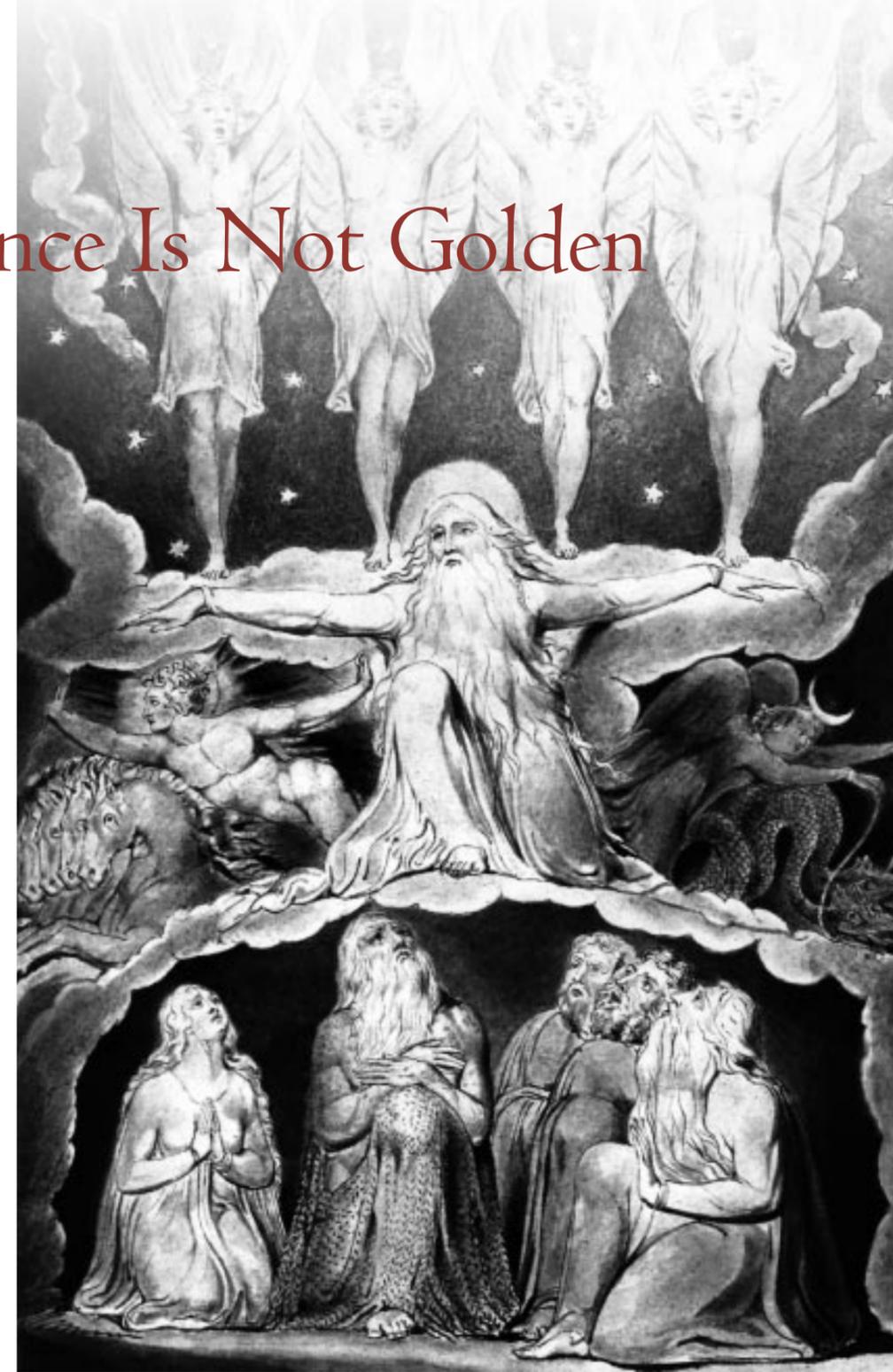
# When Silence Is Not Golden

BY EMILY FLETCHER HARDMAN, MTS’01

*The protagonist in the Book of Job is afflicted with painful sores from his head to his feet and is overwhelmed with suffering. In this state, Job takes a potsherd and sits on a heap of ashes. He has lost his sons and daughters, his livestock, and his servants—his entire fortune.*

*When Job’s three friends hear about his plight, they decide to visit him and offer consolation, but upon seeing Job in his affliction, they barely recognize him as they tear at their robes and weep. Job’s comforters sit with him for seven days and seven nights in complete silence, and as we read this story, we are all called back to the moment of primordial silence before God formed the world in seven days.<sup>1</sup>*

*After seven days, just as God spoke, “Let there be light,” and created the universe out of chaos, Job also speaks—and today, we, too, must speak.<sup>2</sup> For HIV/AIDS has thrown our world into dissonance and chaos, and it will continue to ravage humanity as long as we remain silent. We must speak about HIV/AIDS as well as the social, economic, and political oppression that allows AIDS to flourish because it is through our words, accompanied by our actions, that we make God’s promise of reconciliation a reality for us.*



### Kraaling the Other

In January 2000, a group of students from Vanderbilt University Divinity School participated in a ten-day immersion trip to South Africa. I was one among three students who was selected to stay in South Africa for the entire semester. It was during that time that I learned of the strong connection between HIV/AIDS and the political, economic, and social oppression, and my experiences on the African continent enlightened me about the problem of AIDS in America.

My journey toward understanding began in Soweto, South Africa, where I, along with other Vanderbilt students, visited a mining camp. The roads were muddy from the rain, and the single-sex hostels offered little comfort from the unpleasant weather. The floors were concrete slab, and the only light emanated from a crude stove in the center of the common room. Our host was cordial, yet he looked exhausted. He said very little about his job as a miner or his living conditions. But it is here that HIV/AIDS begins—

in the mining communities—in the midst of isolation, poverty, fear, and silence.

What the miner did not tell us, but I soon would discover, was that in the 19th century, the South African mining industry had a government-supported migratory black labor system which denied migrant workers the right to bring their wives and children to the mines. Consequently, the miners were relegated to single-sex hostels, often miles away from their families. Some of the miners were born in South Africa while some came from other African countries. Regardless of their origins, the government endeavored to prevent black Africans from officially settling in the areas surrounding the mines. This policy was heavily enforced when the apartheid government came to power in the mid-20th century. For this reason, the miners have always been seen as the Other—constantly confronting the perception that they were foreigners who did not belong in the place where they ate, slept and worked.<sup>3</sup>

The oppressive apartheid government in South Africa is no longer in power; however, the miners still feel the effects of that system. Although the mining industry has constructed a few family dwellings, hostels remain single-sex for the most part, and men remain separated from their wives and children. Familial separation and the harsh conditions of the mines contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS in the mining communities. Mining is physically and emotionally taxing, for the miners are expected to work eight hours or more under extreme conditions of heat, filthy air, and noisy machinery with few breaks and little access to food and water. In a study done by Catherine Campbell, a miner laments, “We live for dying, no one lives forever. Every day people lose their arms and legs, and we just live in hope.”<sup>4</sup> Another miner says, “The way we are treated here is not nice. No one cares; no one gives a damn about you. You are treated like a goat, a cow in a kraal; you are left there in the hostels at night and then let out in the morning to go to the fields to work.”<sup>5</sup>

#### Suffering Contradicted

We must ask ourselves: How can we expect miners to protect themselves against a virus they cannot see in an environment where a

man faces death every day of his life? The dehumanization of the miners leads to destructive behaviors such as the frequent consumption of alcohol and unprotected intercourse with commercial sex-workers. As one miner reveals, “The dangers and risks of the job we are doing are such that no one can afford to be motivated by life—so all that motivates us is pleasure.”<sup>6</sup>

Distanced from his wife and children and left feeling isolated and disconnected, a

*“Isn’t it interesting that in the Book of Job, the story is resolved when the children, whom Job has lost, are replaced by other children? Many of us who read this narrative grow uneasy: How can we replace our children? The answer is that they cannot be replaced; we can only make sure that others are not lost to us.”*

miner craves the intimacy that one experiences with flesh-to-flesh sexual contact; therefore, miners rarely practice safe sex when they are with commercial sex-workers. Humans need intimacy, and when their opportunities for intimate relationships are limited, they tend to seek intimacy—even by placing themselves at risk—physically and emotionally. “There is no one who can help me here, and it is quite impossible for me to know all my needs,” explains another miner. “If I were nearer to my wife, she would take care of me, look after me.”<sup>7</sup>

In a state of suffering, Job, once a prosperous man, laments the condition of the poor: “They go about naked without clothing; though hungry, they carry the sheaves; between their terraces they press out oil; they tread the wine presses, but suffer thirst” (24:10-11). Job is an upper-class man with power who probably found it rather easy to claim that those who are prosperous are blessed because they are good people. Those who suffer were once the *other* to Job, but now he experiences a reversal of fortune and perspective.

Job asks a timeless question: Why do people suffer? Through Job we are faced with contradictions in the theology of the Bible regarding suffering. On one hand, when one suffers it is because one has fallen out of favor with God. On the other hand, God is on the side of the oppressed; God is with

those who suffer. HIV/AIDS calls our attention to such questions—questions concerning poverty, power, sexuality, otherness, and ultimately, the nature of God. As a church, we must continue to confront these questions as we speak to one another about HIV/AIDS.

#### Consequences of Myth

I remember making a visit to a rural Zulu village in KwaZulu Natal. The villagers were celebrating the consecration of a new Catholic church building by having a festival. On a beautiful Saturday afternoon, women draped in colorful beads and African cloth danced to the rhythmic sounds of drums and whistles. Men marched around the church with sticks, chanting in unison—a ritual performed to strengthen the new building. The beauty and joy of that day, however, would be interrupted by a simple meeting—a meeting with a Zulu woman.

Like the other women in the village, her spirit was strong, but unlike some, her body looked weak. Her face was slightly gaunt; her body was thin and frail. She smiled and greeted me in Zulu. Later, my friend, Victoria, asked, “Did you see how thin she looked? And, she had *those sores*.” I knew what that meant: This woman had AIDS. I discovered that this woman’s husband worked in the mines in Johannesburg. So, it was then that the ugliness of the mining hostels in Soweto and the beauty of the Zulu village connected in my mind.

Victoria and I talked frequently about the problem of AIDS in her village. She spoke of the many people who had died from AIDS, yet the village remained in denial. For example, many claimed that people were dying because someone had cursed them. Another friend of mine, Patricia, who is a Zulu and Catholic nun, admitted that AIDS was indeed the problem; however, her ideas about how it began in Africa were quite interesting.

She claimed that a snake was the original carrier of the virus. The snake bit a woman, and the woman then spread the virus all over Africa. She seemed to be making a mythical connection to the story of Adam and Eve and original sin, and this is consistent with the perception of AIDS in Africa—that people acquire AIDS because they are

involved in acts of sexual perversion. For this reason, many people do not believe that they are at risk, and those who are aware that they are HIV-positive will not come forward for fear of ostracism or physical harm. People remain silent out of fear.

Women are the individuals who most often are affected by the virus, and it is no coincidence that these same women are also some of the most politically, socially, and economically vulnerable in Africa. I met a young, unmarried woman, a close friend of Victoria, who had three small children in tow. When she and Victoria were young adolescents, they along with other girls in the village, were taken upon the side of a hill, stripped down and inspected by “experts,” village women who believed that they could tell if a girl were still a virgin. If these experts determined that Victoria and her friend were still virgins, they marked them by placing a dab of white clay on the girls’ foreheads. If they were not virginal, they were dabbed with red clay. Then, the girls would travel down the hill where their mothers were waiting anxiously to see the color of their daughters’ foreheads. Many African villages currently use this ritual to try and stop the spread of AIDS; however, I am skeptical about the effectiveness of this practice.

Because she was deemed a virgin, Victoria’s friend had many suitors, and her parents allowed these suitors to visit their home. It was on one of these occasions that a suitor went too far and forced himself upon her. This young girl told her family that she was raped, and it was not long after that when she began to show her pregnancy. The case went before the village elders. It was a matter of the man’s word against the girl’s, and in such cases, the man is always believed.

Unmarried and pregnant, the girl was doomed to the position of “mistress.” She knew that she would never marry. (It is common and acceptable for men in the rural areas to have a wife and a mistress. Mistresses, unlike second wives, often are not supported adequately.) Sometimes women in these situations must go to the mining camps as sex-workers. Prostitutes in the mining camps risk their lives to support themselves and their children. They do not require their customers to practice safe sex because it means admitting that they are dirty or impure.<sup>8</sup> And, it is precisely this vulnerability and powerlessness that encourages the spread of AIDS.

#### Innocence Lost

But AIDS affects a group that is even more vulnerable. In the short time that I worked at a children’s home in Durban, AIDS disrupted the lives of these innocents as well. When a young adolescent boy failed to return from a weekend visit with his mother, the staff at the children’s home called the homeless shelter where his mother resided and inquired about the boy’s whereabouts. The homeless shelter staff told us that the boy’s mother had died that weekend and that her young son was still there. The woman had been a prostitute and had died from AIDS, and now this young boy was officially an orphan.

Unfortunately, there are thousands like him in South Africa, and the country lacks the resources to support its orphans. In the children’s home where I worked, there is one adult per 15 to 25 children from the ages of three to seventeen. Food, beds, and clothing are expensive, not to mention the cost for maintaining adequate adult staffing. The children rarely get the one-on-one attention they need, and many will rarely, if ever again, experience family life. They will become the products of poorly financed institutions.

I remember playing with a group of seven-year-old boys at the home. One of the boys jumped onto my lap, and before I knew it, the other little boys also were demanding my attention. They rarely have such moments with adults because there are so few nurturing adults available for them. Some of these children are themselves HIV-positive, and it saddens and angers me that an entire generation of future leaders, educators, professionals, and artists will soon be lost to HIV/AIDS.

Isn’t it interesting that in the Book of Job, the story is resolved when the children, whom Job has lost, are replaced by other children? Many of us who read this narrative grow uneasy: How can we replace our children? The answer is that they cannot be replaced; we can only make sure that others are not lost to us.

When I returned to the United States, I realized that HIV/AIDS is not only a South African problem. Though less than one percent of the population is infected in this country, just like South Africa, the fastest-growing infected population is the most economically, politically, and socially disadvantaged. In fact, the fastest-growing infected group in America is made up of gay and bisexual



Emily Fletcher Hardman, MTS'01

black men. Black and Hispanic women are soon to follow. The problem is that minority groups are less likely to be tested for HIV or to seek treatment.<sup>9</sup>

#### Hope Regained

Recently, I attended a PanAfrica conference in Nashville on AIDS, and one of the speakers rightly observed that during the past presidential election neither Al Gore nor George W. Bush addressed the below-average state of healthcare in the black community. Our leaders are silent when we cannot afford to be silent. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that in Tennessee there are 7,738 people living with AIDS and 5,482 people who are HIV-positive yet to develop AIDS.<sup>10</sup> AIDS is preventable, and the fact that HIV continues to thrive in our country as well as in other countries should tell us that we are not saying or doing enough.

As I began my first semester at the Divinity School since studying in South Africa, I thought about what I could do to raise awareness about the problem. I started a focus group on campus, hoping that together we could educate ourselves and our churches about the problem in America and in Africa. Through this endeavor, I was fortunate enough to meet two students who also had personal experiences with AIDS. One of the students, Annie Grace Zimondi, a woman from Zimbabwe—a country where one in four people are HIV positive—helped me and others to learn even more about the problem as we viewed it through her eyes. Ces Cook, another student, connected many of us at the Divinity School with other people in Nashville who are addressing the problem.

Those of us who attended the PanAfrica conference had the privilege of hearing the United States Surgeon General, David



Satcher, speak about the issue. Annie Grace and another student, Paul Meier, organized a fundraiser when they discovered that many villagers in Zimbabwe were suffering through the cold nights because they had used their blankets to shroud the dead. I have encouraged VDS students to involve their churches by setting up a partnership between a church in Africa and a church in America. I hope to facilitate this partnership by using Annie Grace's connections in Zimbabwe as well as the resources of an organization I learned about at the PanAfrica conference called Humana People to People.

After Job is afflicted, his wife angrily declares, "Curse God and die!" (2:9). I cannot blame her for being angry, and I think others would agree with me. Anger can lead to positive transformation. But, in addition to being angry, we also must believe that the world ultimately will be healed—newly created—through our speaking. Job eventually is healed by challenging his friends and even by challenging God. He is healed because he opens his eyes and speaks to the injustice around him.

We do not have to speak, like Job, in the conventional understanding of the word "speak," for we also speak through action. Our action may be in the form of providing warm blankets to those who have none. Our voices could be heard through providing medicine and nutritious food for people with AIDS or through providing money for resources in children's homes. We are all free to choose our contribution to the new creation, for we know how the story ends: "In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. And Job died, old and full of days" (42:15-17).

<sup>1</sup>Hubble, Rosemary A. *Conversation on a Dung Heap: Reflections on Job*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998, 22-23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>See HIV InSite at <http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/international/africa/2098.410f.html>. To look at information on migratory black labor in South Africa, go to <http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/InSite.jsp?doc=2098.410f&page=cr-02-01>.

<sup>4</sup>Campbell, Catherine. "Migrancy, Masculine Identities and AIDS: The Psychosocial Context of HIV Transmission on the South African Gold Mines." *Social Science and Medicine*. Vol. 45 (2), 276.

<sup>5</sup>Macheke, Cecil and Catherine Campbell. "Perceptions of HIV/AIDS on a Johannesburg Gold Mine." *South African Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 28 (3) 1998, 150.

<sup>6</sup>"Migrancy, Masculine Identities and AIDS," 277.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 279.

<sup>8</sup>Campbell, Catherine. "Selling Sex in the Time of AIDS: The Psychosocial Context of Condom Use by Sex Workers on a Southern African Mine." *Social Science and Medicine*. Vol. 50 (4), 479-494.

<sup>9</sup>Steinhauer, Jennifer. "Undeterred by a Monster; Secrecy and Stigma Keep AIDS Risk High for Gay Black Men." *The New York Times*. February 11, 2001.

<sup>10</sup>See United States HIV and AIDS statistics by state at <http://www.avert.org/usastats.htm>.

The Hebrew Bible's narrative of Job, the man who obeyed God but was still beset by misfortune, fascinated William Blake—a 19th-century British social critic, visionary, poet, painter, engraver, and printer. In his watercolor *When Morning Stars Sang Together from the Book of Job*, c. 1805–10, Blake depicts Job's mystical awareness of the workings of the universe after the Lord (shown in the center register) reveals himself. Blake's interpretation of the story of Job corresponds to the fourfold nature of humankind. The lowest register where Job and his companions sit represents the flesh; the sun god Apollo (middle left) represents the intellect; opposite is the personification of moon who represents feeling. The choir of angels in the top register symbolizes the spirit. (The watercolor resides in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.)

# Requiem in the First Person

## A Memoir

BY ANNETTE GRACE ZIMONDI, MTS2

*"... those of us who are neither HIV-positive or HIV-infected also 'live with AIDS.' The latest figure for cases worldwide is 36 million, and 11 million children were orphaned by AIDS last year. The hydra head of AIDS rises with multi-consequences that know no frontiers. AIDS is a rubric for every country, all mores, every class, religion, and color. Collectively, we can't 'live with AIDS,' watching members of our human family sicken and die."*

—Nadine Gordimer

1991 Nobel laureate in literature

Africa has only 10 percent of the world's population yet accounts for 70 percent of all global HIV/AIDS cases. Approximately 17 million Africans have died from AIDS since the epidemic began in the late 1970s, and more than 24 million are infected with the virus. By the end of the current decade, the disease is expected to leave 40 million children and adolescents orphaned. No country in Africa has escaped the virus although some are affected far worse than others. The bulk of new infections continues to be concentrated in east Africa and especially in the southern part of the continent; in fact, the southern region has the majority of the world's hard-hit countries.

Before I left Zimbabwe in 1999, it was painful to know how many people were dying from AIDS. It was especially hard for me as a pastor when I had to preside at an average of three funerals per week for individuals whose lives had been claimed by the virus. The saddest part, however, was realizing that the deceased's partner and relatives would associate the death of their loved one with witchcraft or an ancestral curse.

There is a traditional belief in Zimbabwe that death merely does not happen; death

has to be caused by some phenomenon. Thus, after every death, the relatives of the departed will consult a witchdoctor or spirit medium who will tell them the cause of their loved one's death. At times the family has to perform rituals to appease the ancestors and to protect other family members from death. But after participating in all these rituals for someone who has died of AIDS, the rituals would not be of any consequence because in less than two years the deceased's wife or husband would become sick and die.

Because of the persistent denial that most deaths in my country are related to AIDS, nothing is done to ensure that the children will have accommodations, food, and education when all the parents are gone.

Those who know they are infected and are not in denial that they are dying of AIDS keep the reason for their illness to themselves. Some even decide not to tell their wives, husbands, or relatives for fear of blame and rejection. And when they are sick, they avoid people. Those who try to go and visit them will be told the patient is sleeping, and in most cases, only the pastor will be allowed to see the patient. Patients know that if people see them, their secret will be revealed because of the loss of hair and weight. The patients also know that society will not respect anyone who dies from AIDS, so in an effort to die with a semblance of dignity, the truth remains a secret.

It's increasingly difficult to counsel AIDS patients in Africa because of the secretive nature of their lives. You see the familiar signs of the sickness and draw your own conclusions. Every time you try to talk with them, they will tell you that they are going to be all right, but you cannot deny the inevitable. A patient's denial, consequently, imposes limits on the role of the pastor, especially when you would like to help the family members prepare for the undeniable. After losing a sister, three brothers-in-law, and 32 cousins, I am no stranger to the pains and negative effects of HIV/AIDS. I must admit to the reader how painful it remains for me to write about my dear sister who was a wife and mother of four children before she died in 1997.

In Zimbabwe, after the funeral, the relatives gather to give away the deceased's clothes and to nominate one of the deceased's sisters to become the mother of the children. The

youngest of the three surviving daughters, I was appointed to be the mother of my sister's children. I painfully share with you how my sister Angie suffered and eventually died.

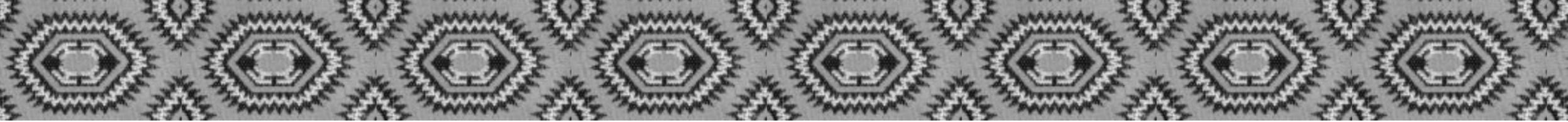
Angie was educated and had a good job. She was seven years older than I, and she started working when I was in primary school. Because my father was a polygamist, he could not afford to pay for my high school education since my older sister was in school. Angie, who was so kind and generous, said she would pay for my education until I finished high school.

She went to church with her children and belonged to the Methodist Women's Organization. Her husband was very outgoing. He would spend weekends with friends, but he would never take Angie with him. Every time my sister tried to ask him where he was going and with whom he was associating, they always had a quarrel. I distinctly remember one time when I was at Angie's house to spend a weekend with them; her husband came home at 3:00 A.M., and they started fighting. Because of her small body, Angie was easily overpowered and hurt by him. I asked Angie why she tolerated the abuse, and she replied, "You will understand when you get married—that's what marriage is all about—and I have to stay in this marriage for the sake of my kids."

When I became a pastor, Angie shared all her worries and marital problems with me. She was worried because her husband had contracted different sexually-transmitted diseases, and I became worried, too. My brother-in-law became ill in 1995 and nearly died from shingles, but he recovered and came home after being hospitalized for two months. Six months later Angie had a miscarriage. She became pregnant again and delivered her last-born boy, who is not in good health.

Angie got sick in 1996. She complained of stomach pains and had a continuous cough. She went to the hospital, but she did not get better, so she decided to see private doctors. Still, there was no change for the better. After three months Angie started deteriorating; she experienced a drastic loss of weight. She stopped going to work, and that's when I realized my sister was extremely sick.

I was over at her house to visit one day, and she told me she suspected she had AIDS. I encouraged her to be tested, but she



Annette Grace Zimondi, known by her peers at VDS as “Annie Grace,” has witnessed the effects of AIDS on the African continent from the perspectives of pastor and member of an extended family. Sitting with Zimondi on the quadrangle lawn is her four-year-old son, Munyaradzi, whose name translated from Shona means “comforter.”

refused. As we were talking, her husband walked into the room. I asked what he thought about Angie’s condition, and before he said a word, Angie said, “He is the reason why I am dying. I am told that two of his girlfriends have died from AIDS.”

Angie’s husband became very defensive and told me he didn’t think AIDS was the reason for her illness. He believed his wife had been bewitched, and he wanted to take Angie to the traditional healers. I advised him to take Angie to the hospital, but he said he would only if the traditional healers failed. When my brother-in-law and my father took Angie to the traditional healers, they were told Angie had been bewitched. She was given traditional medication and they were given the assurance that Angie would get better. They came home so excited that Angie was going to get better. But Angie got worse.

It was around midnight one day when Angie’s daughter, who was then 15, called to tell me that Angie had gotten sick. I immediately rushed to Angie’s house and found her in deep pain. Her husband was not home that night, and as you can imagine, I was very upset. How can a man leave his sick wife alone? Where was he at that odd hour? I rushed Angie to the hospital; she was admitted, and I stayed with her till the following morning.

The next day, I sent a message to our mother, who lives in the village, to come to the city. Mother was shocked when she saw that Angie was dying. She could not eat and would stay at the hospital waiting for visiting hours to begin. You can imagine how painful it was for me when I would leave Mother sitting alone outside the hospital after visiting hours. Because I was serving as a full-time pastor and also nursing my baby, Lindsay, I could not remain at the hospital. I can still see Mother sitting under a tree at the hospital, refusing food, but holding her Bible. Angie’s

husband would come to the hospital once every night but would not allow the children to come with him. As I write, these memories are becoming so fresh, and my friends, I am grieving again.

At the hospital, the doctors conducted a number of tests, but nothing was discovered. The final test they could perform was an HIV test; however, a physician must secure the permission of the patient before this test can be done. I asked Angie if she wanted to have the HIV test, and she told me she was not ready. Her husband was avoiding me at all costs, and as you can imagine, I was so angry with him; I am not sure if I have gotten over the anger.

Angie’s doctor called me one night and told me he wanted to talk to me, so I went over to see him. He told me that even though he had not tested Angie for HIV, he was relatively certain that she was HIV-positive. He told me how to take care of her and suggested we buy expensive tablets called mocria. We bought the tablets, but I never told anyone about my meeting with the doctor. I felt as if no one in the family was prepared for reality, so I kept my thoughts to myself, though at times I would deny this reality since the doctor never tested her. It’s hard, my friends, to accept reality because one is required to accept the inevitability of death. But could I really accept that my sister—this beautiful, kind woman—was dying?

Angie got a little better, and she was discharged from the hospital. I told her that I wanted her to come and live in my house so that Mother and I could help take care of her. She thought this was a good idea since her husband was seldom home. I called her husband and told him I was taking Angie to my house, and he told me that was a good arrangement since he was now working the night shift. Of course I knew he was not telling the truth. I took Angie to our house where friends and relatives would come to

visit her. Members of the church gave us all the spiritual support we needed. After I began attending workshops on AIDS, I could see that Angie was indeed dying from AIDS.

I had time to be with my beloved sister; we talked just as sisters do, we shared jokes, and we laughed when Angie was not in pain. Angie did not want to talk about death, but I decided to open the subject one afternoon. She told me what she wanted done after she was “gone,” but from that day on she never again talked about death, and she never said good-bye.

When Angie’s condition worsened, we took her back to the hospital. She began to lose her memory, and she regurgitated all the medication. She lost weight along with her long, beautiful hair. She changed so radically that she was not physically the Angie we all knew.

Her husband would visit her once in a while, but Mother and I continued to be there for her. On the morning she passed away, Mother was with her in the hospital at 4:10 A.M., and I arrived 20 minutes after she died. As I looked at her through tears and in pain, I eventually was comforted by her calm face—finally, she was resting.

We could not locate her husband, so I called his parents, who later found their son at his girlfriend’s house. I felt, and still feel, that my sister did not receive the care she deserved from her husband. But in life we don’t always receive the care and love we deserve, and we suffer not because we have sinned or have been unfaithful. Since Angie was never tested, her husband doesn’t believe his wife died from AIDS. He married another woman, and they recently lost a baby.

Denial has virtually eradicated my extended family. Noel, my first cousin, died in 1995 leaving behind his wife, Sheila, and four kids. Noel and his family were in denial. After Noel died, his brother, Nicholas, inherited Sheila. Nicholas was already married to Rumbi, and they had two kids. After he

inherited his brother’s wife, Nicholas had two wives, Sheila and Rumbi. In 1997, both Sheila and Rumbi bore children to Nicholas, and the babies died. Sheila gave birth to another baby in 1998, and the infant died within two months of birth. The following year, Nicholas became ill and died. After Nicholas’ death, everybody in the family learned his illness was a result of AIDS; consequently, his wives were not inherited by the third brother. And as I write, both Sheila and Rumbi are sick.

When will this end?

Reverend Zimondi was graduated from the University of Zimbabwe where she received a baccalaureate in religious studies. In 1992 she was called to ordination in the United Methodist Church. While fulfilling the requirements for the master of theological studies degree at the Divinity School, she serves as pastor to the congregation of Saint John’s United Methodist Church in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee.

## A Continent in Peril

An estimated 8.8 percent of adults in Africa are infected with HIV/AIDS, and in seven countries, at least 1 adult in 5 is living with HIV.

### Zambia

Twenty percent of the adult population is infected—1 in 4 adults in the cities; 650,000 children have been orphaned, and 99,000 Zambians died in 1999.

### Namibia

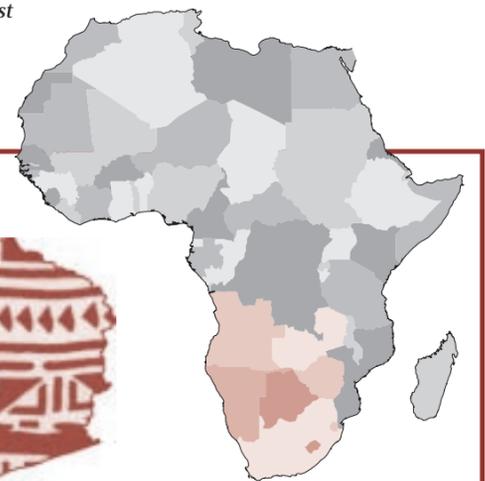
With 19.5 percent of the adult population living with HIV, 57 percent of those infected are women; 67,000 children are AIDS orphans, and 18,000 adults and children die each year.

### Botswana

Although the country has the highest per capita GDP, Botswana has the highest estimated adult infection rate—36 percent; 24,000 die each year; 60,000 children have lost their mothers or both parents to the disease.

### South Africa

This country has the largest number of people living with HIV/AIDS—approximately 20 percent of the adult population, an increase from 13 percent in 1997; 420,000 children have been orphaned, and 250,000 people die each year from the disease.



### Zimbabwe

One-quarter of the adult population is infected; 160,000 adults and children died in 1999, and 900,000 children have been orphaned. Because of AIDS, the life expectancy for Zimbabweans is 43.

### Swaziland

More than 25 percent of adults have HIV/AIDS in this small country; 12,000 children have been orphaned, and 7,100 adults and children die each year.

### Lesotho

Twenty-four percent of adults are infected with HIV/AIDS; 35,000 children have been orphaned, and 16,000 adults and children die each year.

Source: UNAIDS

# Constructing a Critically Cooperative Relationship:

## Religion, State, & Faith-Based Charity

BY CHRISTOPHER KELLY SANDERS, MDIV'95

*The charitable, non-profit organization has become the latest surprising venue for America's ongoing culture wars. The public debate over the Boy Scouts of America's exclusion of gay scoutmasters is being waged in hundreds of municipalities, United Way chapters, and religious institutions across the country. Joining this heated issue is the emerging controversy over President Bush's proposal to provide public funds for so-called "faith-based organizations" that combat social ills.*

The president is proposing an \$8 billion program that would likely include greater tax benefits for those who make donations to religious charities and procedures that would allow the charitable programs of religious institutions to compete against non-religious charitable institutions for government grants. The creation of a special White House office of faith-based programs headed by John J. DiIulio, Jr., a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and a fellow of the Brookings Institution and the Manhattan Institute, will provide oversight and give the program an ongoing high profile.

Although this proposal raises a number of legal issues, they are beyond the scope of this discussion. Still, certain points are worth noting. The American understanding of the Establishment Clause may be shifting. "Separation of church and state" has long been a popular phrase used to summarize the fear of religion and government becoming too intimate, but it does not actually appear in the Constitution. The fact that the charitable arms of some religious institutions currently receive government grants and the fact that the public seems to support government funding of religious charities may make the point moot.



According to a recent poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, 75 percent of Americans support the idea of religious charities applying for government grants.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that, as the survey questions become more specific, the level of support drops. Respondents, for example, are less sure about mosques and Buddhist temples receiving public funds than they are about churches and synagogues. Nevertheless, in the age of the sound byte, the overall approval of the basic idea bodes well for its initial success in the political arena. In casting the debate as an issue of religious groups being discriminated against when they apply for government grants, Bush has strategically taken much of the power out of the separation of church and state mantra.

Legal issues aside, several theological and critical issues remain for religious institutions, especially for the churches because of their number: What are the objectives of this religion and government partnership?, What is charity?, and What is the correct posture of the church toward the state? These are some of the questions that religious institutions must address if they are to engage in the debate on this issue and participate in this program with integrity.

### Repressive Benevolence

The overt objective of public funding of faith-based charitable organizations is to harness the power of organizations that are effectively meeting people's basic needs. Underlying political motivations are surely at work as well. But hints of social control of the poor are also apparent in some discussions of the issue. In the Brookings Institution's collection of essays, *What's God Got to Do with the American Experiment?*, both John DiIulio and political scientist James Q. Wilson discuss the connections among "criminal deviancy," religion, and poverty.

After reciting a litany of "delinquency, drug abuse, gang wars, teenage pregnancy, and single-parent homes," Wilson notes that there is abundant evidence that faith-based programs are "changing the lives of identifiable individuals."<sup>2</sup> According to Wilson, religion is not the whole solution for those in need, but it is the trigger: "Religion does not solve their problems; it heightens them to the point that people feel they ought to do something about them. It creates an opportunity for personal transformation."<sup>3</sup> In a shocking-

ly modern exhibition of Erastianism, Wilson wonders aloud whether it is possible for the government to "take advantage of the transforming power of religion" to combat some of these ills.

The state's deployment of religion to address poverty for the purpose of social control is nothing new. Ernst Troeltsch points out that in late antiquity the "Church lifted the burden from the State on to her own shoulders" in the realm of charity "to feed and control masses of people living in the towns."<sup>4</sup> Peter Brown describes the same phenomenon in more detail in his discussion of the ways in which bishops of the great population centers used charitable outreach and the rhetoric of love of the poor to draw the poor into their constituency. Although such actions flowed from authentically Christian impulses, this strategy also allowed the clergy to transform the balance of power and reconstitute themselves as part of the urban elite. In times of crisis when cities were on the verge of riot, bishops could claim to speak for the city to the emperor, who at least achieved his much-desired order through the workings of the new clerical class.<sup>5</sup>

Nineteenth-century America saw similar developments. Middle and upper class fears of the growth in urban poverty brought calls for the end of publicly-funded charity in favor of religious and private social outreach. Horrified at the prospect of urban riots, the middle and upper classes amplified their rhetoric of poverty as a moral problem of the "dangerous classes." "Repressive benevolence" is how David Wagner describes this tradition of viewing poverty as a moral problem to be controlled by the improvement of the character of poor people. As he puts it, practitioners of Christian philanthropy saw themselves as having a "duty to help change these victims of character flaws."<sup>6</sup> DiIulio, Wilson, and other contemporary advocates of offering public funds to religious charities and then drawing on their spiritual resources to solve social problems are walking down a well-worn path in the history of the relations between church and state.

### The Poor as Spiritually Challenged?

Looking at contemporary proposals for public funding of faith-based organizations in light of the past highlights a number of issues worth considering. Regardless of whether

one holds to a sophisticated "preferential option for the poor" from liberation theology or a simpler "What would Jesus do?" ethic, theological resources should give one pause when considering these proposals. Either the rhetoric of these proposals conveniently ignores the social origin of such phenomena as poverty or it leaves one with the implication that individual character is the source of poverty. If individual character is, indeed, the cause of poverty, then one should ask whose character is the problem. It is one thing for a religious group to answer its call to minister to the poor because of its own sense of identity. It is quite another matter for think-tank experts under the guise of sociology to attempt to manipulate religion for the purpose of reducing "criminal deviancy" among the poor. Lost is any discussion of the need for religion to challenge the rich to address the conditions that create poverty. Without a corresponding discussion addressing how the government might use religion to reform the rich, this talk of the spiritual problems of the poor is either terribly condescending or woefully incomplete.

Perhaps the reason these corollary issues are not addressed is that the proposals for the public funding of faith-based charities are not meant to result in any systematic solution to poverty. They are designed to change the lives of "identifiable individuals," to quote Wilson again. People love a great hardship story. The personal transformation of an individual who goes from a life of destitution to success is more interesting than a story about a system that ensures that the basic needs of society's most vulnerable are met. Perhaps until the public imagination can make the well-being of society a good story, the mind-set will persist.

Another ambiguity lies in the contemporary tendency to classify social problems as individual problems, or at least partially so. The average consumer of mainstream newspapers or television news would be rightly shocked to hear a headline such as "Unemployment increase caused by spiritual decline" or "Child poverty on the rise due to unresolved parental issues." Yet few are surprised that spiritual and secular counseling are increasingly turned to as the solution to these economic problems. The thought seems to be that if one can just fix the insides of the poor, then they can find a job and get themselves out of penury, one person at a time.



### Charity without Illusions

What is the answer for religious institutions seeking to avoid writing another chapter in the history of repressive benevolence that has characterized American religion's response to poverty? If religious groups were to look at poverty as an economic problem with spiritual implications rather than looking at poverty as a spiritual problem with economic implications, they might make a beginning. Religion could still provide the impetus for institutions to get involved in outreach, and religion could still provide the motivation for an individual to take steps to attempt to escape poverty. Analyzing poverty as an economic issue prevents one from assuming the poor have personal problems that should be addressed by reorienting their identities.

Another advantage of viewing social problems as social problems instead of spiritual problems is that it provides a common language of debate. It will not produce automatic agreement about solutions; there are, after all, rival schools of economics. But this shift in language at least avoids the condescending prying into the psyches and souls of people already suffering disadvantage. It also makes it easier for different religious groups to work together on the issue because they are not debating the merits of their particular theologies of poverty.

Another option for the churches, if they truly believe poverty should be regarded as a spiritual problem, is to answer more clearly whose spiritual problem it is. Is poverty a spiritual flaw of the poor or a spiritual challenge to the rich? The Christian view of poverty as a spiritual peril for the rich seems to have been a strong motif of Jesus' own ministry and is reflected in Gospel stories

such as Lazarus and the Rich Young Ruler in Luke 16. This perspective retains the idea that poverty is tied up with character flaws, but it shifts these personal problems to the rich. The disadvantage of this perspective is that it makes poverty a mere background for the drama of salvation for the rich. It also seems to imply that the problem is solved if the rich become poor, when a better solution might be to harness their ability to create wealth for the common good.

A second avenue for the churches seeking to find a spiritual understanding of poverty without patronizing the poor is the tradition of viewing service to the poor as service to Christ himself. The *locus classicus* of this notion is found in Matthew 25 where Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to me." Identifying the poor so closely with Jesus has the advantage of mitigating the tendency to view poverty as a character flaw because Christians would be unlikely to attribute character flaws to Jesus. The disadvantage of identifying Jesus with the poor is the unfortunate propensity to glorify poverty and make it the means of salvation for the rich and middle class.

Given many of the pitfalls of looking at poverty as a religious matter, it is important that religious bodies come to an intentional understanding of what charity means to them. Additionally, religious and charitable groups must reexamine their practices in light of their new understanding. One entrée into this territory is the question, "Who benefits from charity?" The answer is complicated. It is beyond question that the poor receive a great deal of emergency relief because of the benevolence of millions of Americans each year. And it is also true that anyone who has undertaken higher education has benefited from the American charitable impulse. What is less clear is the ability of charitable

programs to make a lasting dent in poverty and the conditions that produce it. Perhaps the principal, lasting effect of charity is the glory of the benefactor. The annual banquets of many charitable, non-profit organizations have become occasions to celebrate the contributions of their major benefactors with awards and the praise of the community. The names of great benefactors, of course, blanket the American institutional landscape. Why do we forget the names of those who have been helped by these institutions?

### Critical Cooperation between Religion and Government

These are issues that plague the philanthropy system in a general sense. What the president's proposal for public funding of faith-based charitable organizations will specifically add to the mixture remains to be seen. The prospect of combining the spiritually invasive tradition of repressive benevolence with the government's concern to control criminal deviancy does not sound like a promising solution for poverty. Nevertheless, there is every indication that religious institutions will readily line up for the forthcoming government grants. Finally receiving long-desired public recognition of their good work and a little extra money, religious institutions may rush in before they realize what they have done. How can faith-based organizations avoid the trap of making mistakes in the midst of their eagerness to get governmental support for their programs?

If religious institutions are going to cooperate with the government in providing relief, however ephemeral, to the problems of poverty, then they should construct a relationship of critical cooperation with governmental agencies. Critical cooperation occurs when a relationship is entered carefully and intentionally by the parties concerned. It promotes the common good of both organizations as well as the good of those affected by the cooperative effort. Critical cooperation does not rule out difference, disagreement, or even competition to a degree; in fact, those attributes are expected as evidence of the critical element in the relationship.

The implication for the president's proposal is important. Churches and other religious bodies should ask themselves whether a dependence upon government support would compromise their ability to advocate long-term, systematic solutions to poverty. Would religious groups be afraid that criti-

*"Identifying the poor so closely with Jesus has the advantage of mitigating the tendency to view poverty as a character flaw because Christians would be unlikely to attribute character flaws to Jesus. The disadvantage of identifying Jesus with the poor is the unfortunate propensity to glorify poverty and make it the means of salvation for the rich and middle class."*

cizing the government could lead to fewer grants? Would religious groups become so comfortable with their heroic role of providing solutions to the poor that they would lobby against a systematic, governmental solution to the problem as some did in the 19th century? Would religious charities try to use their influence to build a base of political power as bishops in late antiquity often did?

The issue of boundaries is clearly at the heart of these troubling questions for religious institutions. In some ways, the government has a natural advantage. Its boundaries with respect to religion are set by the Constitution, by law, and by agency regulations. At the other end, religious groups have a tougher job because the boundaries they set to determine their stance towards the government are more variable when one considers the many religions and the multiplicity of denominations within religious groups. Given their loose boundaries and their desire for funding and recognition, religious bodies may take on more than they should. They may uncritically allow the government too much latitude in setting restrictions on the way they deliver their services. The range of services might also be affected. Instead of the parish council or other local governing body of lay people deciding which ministries to offer based on its mission, a faith-based organization receiving government grants may choose to follow the grants to determine what services to provide with changes year by year. Expert grant writers and social service administrators may come to function as a new priestly class within religious groups that had previously fought hard for the ministry and decision-making power of the entire congregation. Members of such congregations must prepare for the day when the grants administrator explains the disappearance of a long-beloved outreach program by saying "There's just no money for that ministry."

If faith-based organizations are willing to accept complicated restrictions, tailor their program design to fit government grants,

and agree to intrusive, ongoing government oversight, then there is no insurmountable obstacle to their quest to secure public funding to enhance ministries that are already a vital part of providing emergency solutions to poverty. Involvement with the government may even bring a greater focus on professionalization and meeting outcomes than has ever been the case for some congregations' outreach efforts. Unless the relationship is built upon critical cooperation, however, it is likely that the beginning of public funding of faith-based charities may be the beginning of a long period of religious capitulation to the government.

The president's proposal, while a shrewd nod to the power of religion in America, offers many temptations for religious groups. Religion may once again find itself in the role of moral regulator of the poor to serve the government's need to provide social control. Religion may lose its own purpose in the purposes of the government. An uncritical cooperation in which religion is dependent upon the government for funding of its programs may tempt many religious bodies to muffle their prophetic call for a long-term, systematic solution to poverty. Criticizing government policy would either seem hypocritical or too risky if one wants to receive grants the following year. Finally, religious groups may find it hard not to capitalize politically on the growing perception of their ability to channel the actions of the poor. Candidates for office already spend a great deal of time visiting religious bodies. If religious institutions continue to build up their constituencies it is not hard to imagine their growing ability to sway local elections.

As the president's proposal gains momentum, faith-based charitable organizations are going to begin making their decisions about whether to participate in this historic initiative. Even with all the stipulations and red tape, extra funding is hard to turn down. If the program shows early success, then it is likely to shape the church and state landscape for many years. So long as reli-

gious groups enter such relationships critically and find ways to maintain their own identity and their own prophetic voice, they can participate with integrity. In their zeal to work together, faith-based organizations and the government should not forget that their partnership exists for the eradication of poverty, not the spiritual improvement and social control of the poor.

<sup>1</sup>See <http://pewforum.org>.

<sup>2</sup>E.J. Dionne Jr. and John J. Dilulio Jr., eds. *What's God Got to Do with the American Experiment?* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000, 164.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 163.

<sup>4</sup>Ernst Troeltsch. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (Vol. 1). Trans. Olive Wyon. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, 134.

<sup>5</sup>Peter Brown. *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, 78.

<sup>6</sup>David Wagner. *What's Love Got to Do with It? A Critical Look at American Charity*. New York: The New Press, 2000, 54-55.

*Divinity School alumnus Christopher Sanders, a former Dollar General Scholar, is a doctoral student in historical studies in the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt University.*

## Around the Quadrangle continued



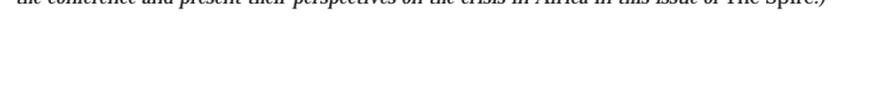
Monica Coleman, MDiv'98, (center) returned to campus last fall as a conference panelist for "The Black Church and Human Sexuality: Beginning the Dialogue" sponsored by the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies and the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality. A doctoral student in the philosophy of

religion and theology program at Claremont Graduate University in California, Coleman participated in the dialogue with Kelly Brown-Douglas, an Episcopal priest and associate professor of systematic theology at Howard University School of Divinity (left) and Edwin C. Sanders, pastor of the Metropolitan Interdenominational Church of Nashville. Other alumni/ae and faculty who contributed to the conversations on deconstructing and preaching about sexuality included Neely A. Williams, MDiv'98; Clifford Smith, MDiv'98; Herbert Marbury, MA'01; Associate Professors Renita Weems and Victor Anderson, and Forrest Harris, director of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute. (The paper presented by panelist Herbert Marbury appears in this issue of *The Spire*.)

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When the PanAfrica Conference 2000 convened in Nashville last fall, a delegation of Divinity School students and faculty met with keynote speaker Dr. David Satcher, (center) Surgeon General of the United States and former president of Meharry Medical College. Satcher and officials from African nations met to discuss how the United States and the world should respond to the devastating AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. PanAfrica is a nonprofit group in Nashville devoted to strengthening relations between the United States and Africa. (Emily Hardman and Annette Grace Zimondi attended the conference and present their perspectives on the crisis in Africa in this issue of *The Spire*.)



For their roles in the theological education of Vanderbilt Divinity School students, field education supervisors were honored at a spring luncheon held at Woodmont Christian Church in Nashville. Viki Matson, (left) director of field education, expressed her appreciation to the clergy, academicians, and professionals who supervised the students in their field placements and helped them become aware of the realistic demands and rewards of different ministries. Alumni/ae Kay Gray, DMin'85, pastor of Hamilton United Methodist Church, and John Collett, MDiv'73, senior pastor of Belmont United Methodist Church, were among the field supervisors for VDS students during the past academic year.

# gleanings

## Practicing the Rules of Conversation

Paul DeHart, assistant professor of theology, was invited by the 2001 graduating class to deliver a personal reflection during the baccalaureate service on Thursday, May 10, 2001, in Benton Chapel. The following excerpt is from his address.

As graduates of this Divinity School, you have been, willingly or reluctantly, part of a very old and very complicated ongoing conversation that we call "higher education," or "the academy," or "the university." It is the hope of the faculty and administration that you will have practiced the rules of that conversation, pondered, and absorbed those rules: that understanding begins with listening as carefully as possible, that proper persuasion is a matter of adducing reasons and not just repeating something in a louder and louder voice, that serious conversation uncovers ineradicable differences of commitment and understanding which should be acknowledged and even celebrated, that one can and should question and criticize oneself, even one's dearest commitments, without questioning the need for commitment itself. The wager or gamble of a school like this one is precisely that a critical initiation into that mysterious and intractable human reality called religious faith properly occurs and flourishes as part of this kind of academic conversation.

We can carry the metaphor of conversation further, for religious faith, too, is a kind of speech or conversation. It is like an immense story about very deep matters which people tell one another, and tell themselves, and tell again and again. What we call tradition happens when one generation tells the story to the next. What we call faith happens when a person understands his or her entire life and world as part of this story, choosing to live as a character in this story. And what we call the academic study of religion occurs when a person determines to understand what this story is and why people tell it, by using the resources of history, philosophy, or social thought.

A question: the person who studies the story and the person who lives the story—whose whole life is like a telling of the story—can they be one and the same person? Not everyone can pull that off, perhaps, but the very existence of Vanderbilt Divinity School depends on those of you who do undertake that dangerous role. I know that some of you will differ on this, as you no doubt differ on many other things. But it is our hope that all of you have become skilled in speaking to our broader culture about religious faith in a more informed, humane, and transforming way. Our charge to all of you is: do it. For those of you who must speak because you believe God has spoken, we hope Vanderbilt has been what the old lintel in the courtyard proudly claims, a *schola prophetarum*, school of the prophets. Go, then, and speak a good word to the world.



Among the newest members of the alumni/ae community are graduates Justin Harvey, Billy Fondren, Matthew McCoy, Arlene Hunter-Griffin, and Emily Hardman.

Seventy-one graduates from the Divinity School and the Graduate School's Department of Religion were welcomed into the Vanderbilt University alumni/ae community on Friday, May 11, 2001. Chancellor Gordon Gee conferred the master of divinity degree upon 23 students and the master of theological studies degree upon 16 graduates during commencement exercises on Alumni Lawn. Nineteen students received the master of arts degree in religion while 13 members of the Class of 2001 were awarded the doctorate of philosophy in religion.

### Kudos for the 2000-2001 Academic Session

Founder's Medal for first honors in the Divinity School, William A. Newcomb Prize for receiving honors on one's senior project, Umphrey Lee Dean's Award for best exemplifying the School's vision  
Krista Elizabeth Hughes, MA'98, MDiv'01, Beaufort, South Carolina

Academic Achievement Award  
Emily Fletcher Hardman, MTS'01, Helena, Arkansas

Florence Conwell Prize for outstanding preaching  
Tanya Marie Pile, MDiv'01, Bellingham, Washington

J. D. Owen Prize for most successful work in the New Testament, St. James Academy Award for the outstanding sermon  
Rachael Leigh Nance, MDiv'01, Madisonville, Kentucky

W. Kendrick Grobel Award for outstanding achievement in biblical studies  
Robert J. Teitelbaum, MTS'01, Huntington Beach, California

Luke-Acts Prize for significant research on an aspect of Luke-Acts  
Kathy Chambers Williams, MDiv'99, doctoral student in New Testament, Antioch, Tennessee

Nella May Overby Memorial Award for Field Education  
Janetta Sue Cravens, MDiv'01, Newcastle, Oklahoma

Elliott F. Shepard Prize in church history  
Andrew Carl Thompson, MDiv'01, Paragould, Arkansas

Wilbur F. Tillett Prize in ethics  
Nicole Ann Smith, MTS'01, Holland, Indiana

Christian Board of Publication Awards to Disciple students  
Rachael Leigh Nance, MDiv'01, Madisonville, Kentucky  
Heather Renee Godsey, MDiv'2, Bloomington, Indiana  
Claudia Woodall Carls, MDiv'2, Memphis, Tennessee

Student Government Association Community Service Awards  
Aline Patte, Registrar of the Divinity School, Nashville, Tennessee  
Diana Gallaher, MTS'01, Lebanon, Tennessee

Bettye Ford Award for service to the faculty and students of the Graduate School's Department of Religion  
Vincent Wynne, doctoral student in religion and personality, Nashville, Tennessee

## A Theological Homecoming

BY KRISTA HUGHES, MA'98, MDIV'01

Three years ago, when I sat down to write the essays for my application to the Divinity School, I read the commitments stated at the beginning of the VDS catalog. Although the academic rigor that a university divinity school affords was a draw, VDS's clear and vital commitments to social justice and diversity appealed to me.

I often say that I grew up with one foot in the church and one foot out of church because my parents and I experienced difficulty in finding a faith community that shared our most basic values. The ostensibly Christian living that I witnessed while growing up seemed hypocritical at best, and it was difficult to claim either a congregation or my own Christian identity. I had always considered myself a morally upright person, but I thought I was a bad Christian because I did not "believe the right ideas," and this perception inevitably gave rise to spiritual dissonance.

But during my graduate studies, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and Vanderbilt University Divinity School have offered models of Christianity and Christian living that resonate with my own. Not only is social justice a central commitment, but critical reflection is an integral component of faithful living—not its antithesis. My decision to attend VDS ultimately proved to be a theological homecoming.



For first honors in the Divinity School, Krista Hughes, MA'98, MDiv'01, received the Founder's Medal, an award endowed in 1877 by Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt as one of his gifts to the University. Dean James Hudnut-Beumler (standing center) presented the medal to Hughes as Chancellor Gordon Gee (right) conferred the honor. Observing the presentation is Martha R. Ingram (seated) of Nashville, chairman of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust. The 82nd Founder's Medalist in the Divinity School's history, Hughes currently is a candidate for diaconal ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Critics of VDS, particularly more conservative ones, are quick to cite the "blasphemies" that are taught and discussed in our quadrangle. Even our supporters are well aware of the institution's progressivism. Last fall, for example, a Presbyterian USA minister respectfully joked with my dad that it would be a miracle if I came out of Vanderbilt still a Christian. But for so many of us, VDS offers that window into and that avenue toward the faith for which we struggle.

In a community forum last fall, Professor Fernando Segovia turned around the classic definition of theology as "faith seeking understanding." He argued that in the academy, within our postmodern context, we often find that our theological reflections are better described as "understanding seeking

faith." That has been my experience at VDS.

The most inspirational text I have encountered in the three years since I wrote my application essays is Micah 6:8. "This is what God asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God." The beauty of this scripture is that it precisely is not a specific prescription for what constitutes faithful living. Rather, it is a basic call to justice, compassion, and faith; it is a call to each of us to live into one's own unique fullness-of-being as a child of God created in God's very image. The blessing of my experience at VDS—specifically the community of individuals who have shaped that experience—is that I have come to discern and to appreciate what that call means for me.



After having the academic title "master of divinity" conferred upon them, Randy Holste, Alex Jackson, Rachel Nance, Andrew Thompson, and Michael Vaughn gather in the quadrangle.



Judy Elmes, a congregant at Trinity United Methodist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, was reunited with her friend, graduate Diana Gallaher, following the Divinity School's Act of Worship and Celebration in Benton Chapel.

## From the Alumni/ae Association President

Greetings from the Vanderbilt University Divinity School/Oberlin/GDR Alumni/ae Association!

We have had an exciting year and plan an even better one to come. Our 2000-01 alumni/ae association and council meetings were held during the Cole Lectures featuring Marcus Borg, who offered two thoughtful and provocative lectures. In the spring, many of you received an invitation to the "God's Economy and the Global Economy" conference presented by Douglas Meeks, the Cal Turner Chancellor's Professor of Wesleyan Studies. Those of you who attended this continuing education event know the wealth of information, and more importantly, the challenge that Professor Meeks offered to religious communities as we seek to respond faithfully to the market forces reshaping our global community. Also in March, Kwok Pui-lan, the William F. Cole Professor of Christian Theology and Spirituality at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, presented the 2001 Antoinette Brown Lecture entitled, "Engendering Christ." Those who attended continue discussing her powerful presentation.

Now, either because you attended these events and had a great time or because I have whetted your appetite for what you missed, let me fill you in on the happenings for 2001-02:

On Thursday, September 13, 2001, you are invited to the Fall Convocation and Installation of the Divinity School's 15th Dean, James Hudnut-Beumler, followed by a reception. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us in this celebration.

Our alumni/ae association and council meetings will occur again during the Cole Lectures. Our 2001 lecturer is Parker Palmer, internationally known writer, lecturer, activist, and teacher. Dr. Palmer has written such acclaimed works as *The Company of*



*Strangers, To Know as We Are Known*, and *Let Your Life Speak*, selected as the 2000 Book of the Year by the Association of Theological Booksellers. His timely topic is "Divided No More: Spiritual Formation in a Secular World." The dates for the Cole Lectures are October 4 and 5, 2001. Alumni/ae activities include a breakfast with our new dean, James Hudnut-Beumler, and an association meeting on October 5, preceding the

second lecture. Dean Hudnut-Beumler will address us on "Ten Ways to Improve the Divinity School." This will be a great opportunity to meet the dean, catch up with old friends, and make new acquaintances. You will receive information regarding time, place, and reservation procedures in the Cole Lectures brochure.

Our alumni/ae council will have a luncheon meeting following the October 5 morning lecture—more details about that event will come to you dedicated souls who serve so faithfully on the council. Again, please mark your calendar and join us.

On Monday evening, October 29, 2001, the Divinity School, in conjunction with the Cal Turner Program in Moral Leadership and the Vanderbilt Center for Genetics and Health Policy, is sponsoring a lecture by Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman, associate professor of social ethics and director of the Program in Jewish Studies at San Francisco State University and president of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities. Professor Zoloth-Dorfman will address ethical concerns surrounding genetic science and the role of faith communities in the public dialogue.

The whole arena of genetic research has profound and as yet largely uncharted implications for our human community. Our divinity school is committed to engaging

faith communities in ongoing public education and conversation, bringing to bear the resources of our faith traditions as we struggle together to understand the moral implications and help shape the future of this emerging science.

In addition, the Divinity School is planning again to host a series of community breakfasts, offering us opportunities to engage faculty and others in topics of interest. Watch the mail for more information about the community breakfasts.

The date for the next Antoinette Brown Lecture is Thursday, March 14, 2002. Again, pull out that trusty calendar and save this date to hear Susan Thistlethwaite, president of Chicago Theological Seminary and professor of theology and culture, deliver the 28th annual lecture.

One final word regarding the new leadership of our school. During this last year, most of you have received communication from Dean James Hudnut-Beumler seeking your thoughts on the life and direction of the Divinity School. As president of the alumni/ae association and associate director of field education, I have had the privilege of working this year with him, and he brings both energy and exciting new possibilities to the programs here. If you have not already, I would encourage you to take one of these opportunities to meet him and share both your memories and hopes for our school.

It continues to be my privilege to serve as president of the alumni/ae association for these two academic years. I welcome your suggestions, thoughts, and insights and hope to see you at some of the events at VDS.

Peace,

Trudy H. Stringer, MDiv'88  
trudy.h.stringer@vanderbilt.edu



WOODIE S. KNIGHT

Founder's Medalist and banner bearer Krista Hughes meets with her father, Russ Hughes, and Associate Dean Lloyd Lewis before leading the procession of Divinity School faculty and degree candidates onto Alumni Lawn.



WOODIE S. KNIGHT

Rob Teitelbaum, Nicole Smith, and Jennifer Eaton received the master of theological studies degree during commencement.

## Faculty News Notes

**Joel F. Harrington**, director of the European Studies Program and associate professor of history at Vanderbilt University, is the editor of *A Cloud of Witnesses: Readings in the History of Western Christianity* published by Houghton Mifflin. Instead of adhering to the conventional approach of assembling an anthology of great Christian thinkers, Harrington celebrates the diversity of the western Christian tradition by using a broad historical range of primary sources that document well-known as well as lesser-known and anonymous ecclesiastical figures. Among the men and women readers encounter are Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, a fifth-century ascetic, an eighth-century German abbess, a 15th-century Italian mystic, Catherine of Genoa, a 16th-century Anabaptist martyr, an 18th-century Native American saint, condemned heretics, witches, and social activists Frederick Douglass, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King Jr., and Leonardo Boff.

**James Hudnut-Beumler**, dean and Anne Potter Wilson Distinguished Professor of American Religious Studies at the Divinity School, was quoted in news reporter Karen R. Long's article, "Loaves, Fishes, and Potluck: Food's Place in Churches," published in the December 2, 2000, edition of *The Plain Dealer* of Cleveland, Ohio. When commenting on religious historian Daniel

Sack's new book, *Whitebread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture*, Hudnut-Beumler remarked, "We understand that there's something special about Jews keeping kosher, Muslims fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, Roman Catholic street festivals in honor of particular saints, and Greek Orthodox churches hosting Greek festivals. What Sack shows us is that even Protestants, whose food seems utterly unremarkable, engage with food and drink to mark out what they believe is the good life, what God requires, and what they stand for."

**Randall M. Falk, MA'66, DD'69**, lecturer in Jewish Studies and rabbi, emeritus, of Temple Ohabai Shalom in Nashville, is among the 32 local religious leaders who have joined the living wage movement to help Nashville's lowest-paid employees rise from the poverty level. "It's shameful for a city to provide an arena and all these luxuries and yet not provide the necessity of a living wage for the people we employ," stated Rabbi Falk in the May 13, 2001, issue of the *Tennessean*. Other religious leaders who have petitioned Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell and the Metro Council to consider the morality of the living wage include alumni/ae **Bill Barnes, BA'56**, a United Methodist minister and advocate for low-income residents; **Lisa Hunt, MDiv'86**, pastor at Saint Ann's Episcopal Church; and **Dan Rosemergy, MDiv'82, DMin'88**, a field education supervi-

sor and adviser to United Church of Christ students enrolled in the Divinity School.

**Amy-Jill Levine**, the Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies and director of the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality, composed the annotations and study notes for the books of Tobit and Daniel in the third edition of *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* published by Oxford University Press.

**Lou Silberman**, Hillel Professor of Jewish Literature and Thought, emeritus, has gifted his personal library to Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, where he was visiting professor of religion in 1972. The Lou Silberman Judaica Collection was dedicated on April 25, 2001, in the Athenaeum of the Laurence McKinley Gould Library.

**Renita Weems**, associate professor of Hebrew Bible, was interviewed for Rhonda B. Graham's article, "Finding Your Faith," published in the January 15, 2001, issue of *Heart & Soul*. "The real authentic search begins when you get to the point where you wake up crying and go to sleep crying," stated Weems, "or there is a loneliness inside of you that even a relationship and girlfriends cannot satisfy."

## Alumni/ae Class Notes

**Justin J. Hartman, Oberlin BD'42**, and his wife, Margaret, have moved to Applewood at Amherst, a retirement community in the countryside south of Amherst, Massachusetts.

**Joseph Fred Cloud Jr., BA'44, BD'47, DMin'90**, associate professor of social sciences at American Baptist College in Nashville, taught two professional courses, "Strategies of Social Change" and "Building Coalitions," at the 53rd annual conference of the National Association of Human Rights Workers held during October 2000 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

**Howard F. Huff, BD'49**, a retired missionary, seminary professor, and Disciples of Christ pastor, has been awarded the title "minister emeritus" by the congregation of Bethany Christian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He and his wife, Rosemary, also celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on June 10, 2001.

**Martha Frances Garner Albers, MA'55**, has been named one of five distinguished alumni/ae for 2001 at Denison University, the highest award bestowed by Denison's Society of the Alumni/ae in recognition of outstanding achievements that reflect honor upon the university. Albers was chosen for her work as a community advocate for battered women and for her role in founding Haven House in 1987.

**Robert Daniel Fraley, MDiv'56**, and his wife, Ruth, recently celebrated 50 years of marriage. Attending the celebration of their golden anniversary were their four children, ten grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

**James H. Beasley Jr., BA'60, BD'63, DMin'77**, retired in June as pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Crossville, Tennessee. He writes that he and his wife, Caroline Daniel Chadwick Beasley, BA'61, will continue to live in Crossville, where "the fishing is great," but will be moving to a new home designed in the architectural style of Frank Lloyd Wright.

**Richard T. Herrington, Oberlin BD'61**, received the faithful servant award from the Disciples of Christ Historical Society for his 20 years of ministry in the Ohio Council of

Churches. Peter M. Morgan, president of the historical society, conferred the honor on Herrington during the Ohio Regional Assembly held in October 2000 and described him as "one who does not seek glory or recognition for himself and who is always willing to move to the tasks that need direction."

**David Woodyard, Oberlin MST'65**, chair of the religion department at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, has been honored by his peers and students as the new holder of the Brickman Distinguished Service Chair. In announcing the appointment, Denison President Dale Knobel described Woodyard as one who is "outstanding in his role as teacher, in his concern for students, and in his exemplary service to the community."

**Edward W. Bergstraesser, Oberlin MST'66**, retired on July 1, 2000, as senior pastor at the First United Church of Oak Park, Illinois, after a pastorate of 20 years.

**John H. Tullock, PhD'66**, professor of religion, emeritus, at Belmont University, has completed work on the sixth edition of *The Old Testament Story* published by Prentice Hall.

**Hycel Berman Taylor, MDiv'69**, senior pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Evanston, Illinois, was featured in an article published in the January 11, 2001, issue of the *Evanston Review*. For Sara Loeb's story "Pastors Reflect on King Legacy," Taylor recounted traveling from Nashville to Selma, Alabama, where he marched behind the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. in protest of the violence that occurred on March 7, 1965, when 600 mostly elderly African American men and women were beaten and trampled by Alabama state troopers during a march from Selma to Montgomery to assert their rights to vote. "It was rewarding, dangerous, and exciting," stated Taylor. "I was afraid, but the people who were there, whether black or white, all came with a lot of courage."

**Robert N. Watkin Jr., PhD'69**, has retired officially as a Presbyterian minister; however, he continues serving in interim capacities

while teaching religion at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga where he is an adjunct professor in the philosophy and religion department. During his retirement, Watkin and his wife, Alice Gant, BA'59, plan to spend time with their three children and two grandchildren.

**Jeanne McCarley Stevenson-Moessner, BA'70**, assistant professor of pastoral theology and spiritual formation at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Iowa, was named a Henry Luce III Fellow in Theology for the 2000-01 academic year. She joined six other scholars—from Princeton Theological Seminary, Yale University Divinity School, Duke University Divinity School, Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Brite Divinity School of Texas Christian University, and Howard University School of Theology—chosen by The Henry Luce Foundation and the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. In acknowledging Stevenson-Moessner's appointment as one of the year's seven Luce Fellows, University of Dubuque President Jeffrey F. Bullock described her as "a compassionate, articulate, sensitive teacher and excellent scholar." She is the editor of *In Her Own Time: Women and Developmental Issues in Pastoral Care*. During her fellowship year, she conducted theological research on the topic "Womb-love: The Practice and Theology of Adoption in Christianity and Contemporary Culture." Stevenson-Moessner's award marks the second consecutive year a member of the University community has been chosen as a Luce Fellow in Theology; Bonnie Miller-McLemore, professor of pastoral theology and counseling, received a fellowship for 1999-2000 to research the neglected roles of children in religious thought and practice. *In Her Own Time* features an essay by Miller-McLemore.

**Perry H. Biddle Jr., DMin'73**, reports that his book *The Goodness of Marriage*, first published in 1984 by Abingdon Press, has sold over 16,000 copies.

**Darrell C. Filler, MDiv'73**, currently serves as the interim senior pastor at the First United Church of Christ in Canton, Ohio.

Ordained as a Christian Church minister, Filler shares an ordained partnership standing in the UCC.

**Jerry Gladson, MA'73, PhD'78**, senior minister at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Marietta, Georgia, announces the publication of his memoir, *A Theologian's Journey from Seventh-Day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity*, by Life Assurance Press. Among the significant influences Gladson discusses in his spiritual autobiography is studying at the Divinity School. He teaches part-time at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur and at the Psychological Studies Institute in Atlanta.

**Edward V. Lauing Jr., MDiv'73**, has been named president and chief executive officer of the NUASIS Corporation, a leading developer of IP-based, multi-channel contact center software located in San Jose, California. He also is the founder of iBuyLine, an internet retailer specializing in technology for electronic software distribution.

**Mark Allan Noll, MA'74, PhD'75**, has received an appointment as professor of evangelical theology at Harvard University Divinity School. He previously held the McManis Chair of Christian Thought at Wheaton College where he cofounded and directed the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals.

**William Edward Reiser, S.J., PhD'77**, associate professor of religious studies at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, announces the publication of *Jesus in Solidarity with His People: A Theologian Looks at Mark* by Liturgical Press. In his fifth book, Reiser advances the argument that the spiritual effectiveness of Mark's story is determined largely by how much the reader is willing to live, like Jesus, in solidarity with God's people.

**David Randall Boone, MDiv'78, MA'83, PhD'87**, has accepted the position of director of development for the College of Preachers at Washington National Cathedral. He writes, "I am currently in that stage of being overwhelmed and disoriented by new information." Boone recently coordinated the American visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury who delivered a lecture in the nave of the Cathedral. During May, the

College of Preachers sponsored "The City of God for American Cities," a conference on leadership for urban ministry; Renita Weems, associate professor of Hebrew Bible at the Divinity School, was a panelist at this conference held in Memphis. Alumni/ae may correspond with Boone at rboone@cathedral.org.

**Eric Carl Holmstrom, MDiv'78**, currently serves as chaplain to a long-term care community at HCA Manor Care in Devon, Pennsylvania.

**Roy Brasfield Herron, MDiv'80, JD'80**, a Tennessee Democratic State Senator from Dresden representing the 24th district and a partner in the legal firm of Neese Herron & Miller-Herron, has coauthored with L.H. "Cotton" Ivy, *Tennessee Political Humor: Some of These Jokes You Voted For*. Published by the University of Tennessee Press in Knoxville, the book catalogs anecdotes and tall tales about state and local politics, judicial decisions, and Capitol Hill maneuverings. The authors write in the introduction, "... people in politics believe in laughter. The book of Proverbs instructs, 'Laughter doeth good like a medicine.' As the most famous native of Grinder's Switch, Tennessee, the Grand Ole Opry star Minnie Pearl, used to say, 'Laughter is God's hand on the shoulder of a troubled world.'"

**Charles Brooks Gibson, MDiv'82**, resides in Kannapolis, North Carolina, with his wife, Lindy, and their daughter, Hannah Brianne, 2 1/2. He currently serves as a part-time pastor at Royal Oaks United Methodist Church and works as a substance abuse counselor at the Charlotte Rescue Mission and as chaplain for Rebound, the men's recovery program. While seeking certification as a clinical addiction specialist and also as a pastoral care specialist, Gibson conducts workshops for domestic violence offenders. VDS classmates may correspond with him at Ancillary9@aol.com. "I have many fond memories of my days at the Divinity School," writes Gibson, "and I hope to establish new connections with alumni/ae."

**Jack Arthur Keller Jr., MA'82, PhD'88**, has been named vice president of publishing and editorial director for Westminster John Knox Press, an imprint of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Since 1984, Keller served in the United Methodist Publishing

House where he was curriculum editor and publisher, books acquisition editor, and facilitator of the planning and publication of the *New Interpreter's Bible*.

**Robert Christopher Blinn, MDiv'83**, pastor of Relief Methodist Church and the sister church, Hites Chapel, in Winchester, Virginia, was profiled in the March 21, 2001, issue of the *Winchester Star*. In "Minister Follows a Different Flight Plan," newspaper staff writer Linda McCarty interviewed Blinn about his decision to withdraw from the U.S. Air Force Academy and study religion at Emory & Henry College in Virginia. "I decided if I were going to make the ultimate commitment to the Air Force I really wouldn't have room for my faith, and my faith was more important," remarked Blinn. "The upperclassmen told me how they had been able to do both, but I wasn't satisfied with their answer." He and his wife, **Mary Beth Turkington Blinn, MDiv'83**, pastor of Kernstown United Methodist Church, matriculated at the Divinity School in 1979. While pursuing their degrees, they began their ministry as pastors at Cedar Hill United Methodist Church near Nashville.

**Elizabeth Ann Richardson, MDiv'84**, director of electronic publishing at the Upper Room in Nashville, received the Award of Excellence for the Internet from the United Methodist Association of Communicators for the Web site www.upperroom.org.

**David Schnasa Jacobsen, MDiv'86, MA'93, PhD'97**, assistant professor and director of the master of theology degree in homiletics at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary of Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, served as visiting professor in practical theology at the University of Kiel in Germany during the summer semester of 2001. The author of *Preaching in the New Creation: The Promise of New Testament Apocalyptic Texts*, and a coauthor of *Preaching Luke Acts*, Jacobsen resides in Toronto with his wife, Cindy, an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and their children, Christian, 8, and Grace, 5.

**Donald LeRoy Mitchell, DMin'86**, has assumed the position of temporary supply pastor of the historic Great Conewago Presbyterian Church in Hunterstown, Pennsylvania. The church was used as a field

hospital during the Battle of Gettysburg and has been maintained in as authentic conditions as possible.

**Carmen L. Lile-Henley, MDiv'88**, received the doctorate of ministry from Wesley Theological Seminary on May 7, 2001, after completing a program track on "Wesley and the Poor" with a project titled "Barriers to Relationships with the Poor Among Clergy." Lile-Henley currently serves as coordinator of Love and Justice Ministries for the Tennessee Council on Ministries in Nashville. She and her husband, George, are the parents of a son, John-Charles.

**Kathy Armistead, MA'88, PhD'90**, is development editor for academic resources at Abingdon Press in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Kelly Diane Turney, MDiv'91**, an elder in the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church and the assistant director for Equity and equal opportunity programs at Emory University, has compiled and edited *Shaping Sanctuary: Proclaiming God's Grace in an Inclusive Church*, a book of ecumenical, inclusive worship resources published by the Reconciling Congregations Program in Chicago.

**Christine Marie Caron, MTS'92**, has accepted a position as assistant professor of Christian and biomedical ethics, effective January 2002, at Seattle University in Washington where she also will serve as cocreator of the university's institute in ethics, spirituality, and health. She will be married to Carl Gebhardt on October 21, 2001.

**Allan Fesmire, MTS'92**, serves as chaplain at Good Samaritan Home in Evansville, Indiana, where he primarily works with Alzheimer's patients and their families in the GSH Pathways Continuum. He was married on May 19 to Sharon Fosdick, office manager of the religious life department at Deaconess Hospital in Evansville.

**Gregory Lynn Reece, MDiv'92**, adjunct instructor of religion and philosophy at the University of Montevallo, Alabama's public liberal arts university, received his doctorate in the philosophy of religion from Claremont Graduate University in California. He and his wife, Kristen Gilbert, and their son, Samuel, reside in Calera, Alabama.

**Susan Elizabeth Steinberg, MDiv'92**, is serving as the interim Presbyterian campus minister at Duke University during the 2001-02 academic year. An essay by Steinberg titled "Robes in the Closet" will be published in the winter 2002 issue of *The Spire*.

**Linda Marie Martin, MDiv'93**, was graduated from Drew University's Graduate School in May upon the successful defense of her dissertation titled *Women, Families, and Homes: An Ethnographic and Historical Study of Salvation Army Corps Life*.

**Donna Ann Dodson, BS'94, MDiv'00**, and **Heather Stamey Dillashaw, MDiv'00**, reside in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where Donna teaches mathematics and works as a community educator for the Orange County Rape Crisis Center and where Heather serves as associate pastor at the United Church of Chapel Hill, United Church of Christ. They write, "We continue to live happily as life partners since our commitment ceremony on August 14, 1999."

**Patricia Wade Eichner Mouer, MDiv'94**, was ordained on December 9, 2000, at Grace Episcopal Church in Asheville, North Carolina, by the Right Reverend Robert Hodges Johnson, Bishop of Western North Carolina.

**Gary Patrick White, MDiv'95**, associate chaplain at Vanderbilt University, presented a program on diversity issues within the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community (GLBT) at the annual conference of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators held in Seattle, Washington.

**Nicole Cheri Kirk, MDiv'96**, minister at the East Shore Unitarian Universalist Church in Kirtland, Ohio, and her husband, Jeffrey Adam Brauer, JD'94, are parents of a son, Kirk Eliot, born August 22, 2000.

**Karen Leigh Stroup, PhD'96**, lecturer in anthropology at Vanderbilt University and a coauthor of *Speak the Language of Healing: Living with Breast Cancer without Going to War*, was guest editorialist for the April 23, 2001, issue of Nashville's *City Paper*. In her editorial, "Time to Debunk the Myths of Homosexuality," Stroup acknowledged the acronym GABLE from the Divinity School's

Office of Gay, Bisexual, and Lesbian Concerns as the most effective expression for referring to "everyone else who doesn't identify with the heterosexual world."

**David Hadley Jensen, PhD'99**, assistant professor of religion and philosophy at Manchester College in North Manchester, Indiana, announces the publication of *In the Company of Others: A Dialogical Christology* by The Pilgrim Press. The book presents a Christology that encourages dialogue with people of other faiths and explores the practice of kenosis, or self-emptying, as an image for the way Jesus embodies openness to others. Sallie McFague, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Theology and dean, emerita, wrote the foreword to Jensen's book, and Peter C. Hodgson, the Charles G. Finney Professor of Theology, is among the theologians who have endorsed the author's work.

**Adrian Adam Durllester, MTS'00**, serves on the faculty of Akiva Jewish Day School in Nashville where he teaches Hebrew and Judaica to students in the first and second grades and music classes to students enrolled in kindergarten through sixth grade. Durllester was elected recently to membership on the board of directors for the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Educators.

**Emily Fletcher Hardman, MTS'01**, and **Justin Morgan Harvey, MTS'01**, were married on June 2, 2001, at Saint Thomas Episcopal Church in Eustis, Florida. Members of the wedding party included **Heather Benko, MTS'00**; **Matthew Drever, MTS'00**; and **James Lech, MTS'00**.

**Rebecca Marie Heller, MDiv'01**, currently serves as associate minister of Cherry Log Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Cherry Log, Georgia.

## Obituaries

**Sherman L. Beird, Oberlin B**, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on November 13, 2000.

**Frederick Otto, Oberlin B**, of Springfield, Ohio, at the age of 93 on October 4, 1999.

**Richard H. Staple, Oberlin B**, of Lincoln, Nebraska, on April 8, 1999.

**Mendell E. Rimmel, Oberlin B**, of Elyria, Ohio, professor of mathematical sciences, emeritus, at Kent State University and a Methodist minister, on April 7, 2000.

**Charlotte P. LaCroix, Oberlin MA'32**, of Lakewood Ocean, New Jersey, on September 12, 1999.

**Howard H. Patrick, Oberlin BD'36**, of Columbus, Ohio, on September 23, 2000.

**R.U. Roethlisberger, Oberlin B'36**, of Redlands, California, on September 28, 2000.

**Albert L. Faurot, Oberlin MA'40**, of Vancouver, Washington, formerly of Silliman University in Dumaguete City, Philippines, on January 24, 1998.

**Charles Edward Dyer, D'42**, of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, a chorister and lector at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church in Pittsfield and professor of education and associate dean of the graduate school, emeritus, at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, at age 86 on November 29, 1999, from the effects of a stroke; survivors include his wife of 60 years, Prudence Osborn Dyer, BA'41, professor of education, emerita, at Drake University.

**Marcus M. Gurley, BD'42**, of Madison, Tennessee, on September 21, 2000.

**Eugene S. Ogrod, BD'42**, of Granite Bay, California, on July 8, 1999.

**W. Myron Glick, Oberlin BD'46**, of Walworth, Wisconsin, on April 20, 1999.

**Guy F. Perry, Oberlin BD'46**, of Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 1, 2000.

**Chalmers A. Mattern, Oberlin BD'50**, of Springfield, Ohio, on February 9, 2001.

**O. Vance Mason, BD'52**, of Chickasaw, Alabama, on December 25, 2000.

**David Gist Howell, BD'53**, of Modesto, California, a retired minister in the Congregational Church, UCC, and former administrator of Edson Convalescent Hospital, at age 72 on January 27, 2001.

**Clarence S. Fairbanks, Oberlin B'57**, of Greenville, Ohio, on May 19, 2000.

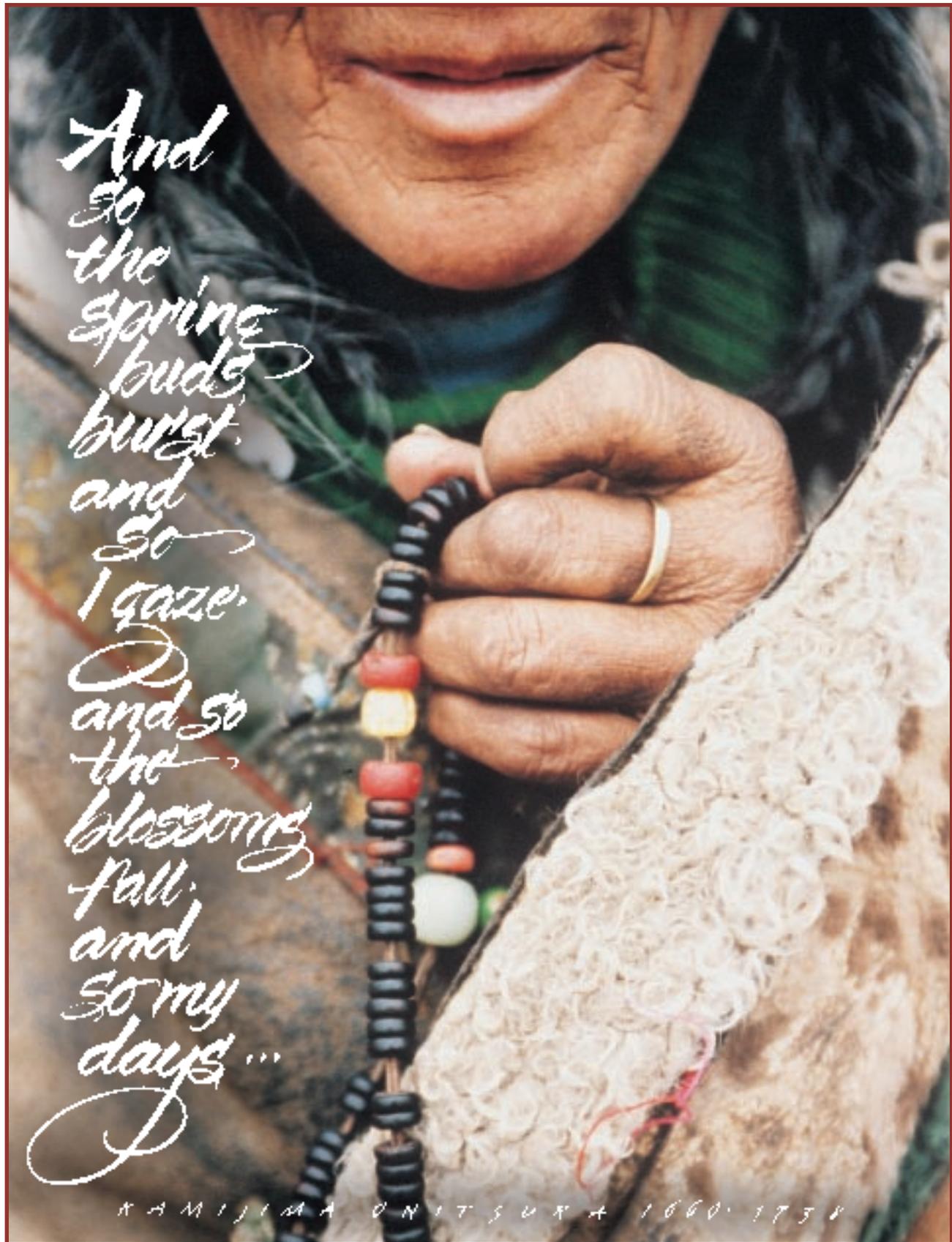
**Beverly G. Gulick, Oberlin MRE'62**, of Cleveland, Ohio, on July 21, 1999.

**Neil Mason White, Oberlin BD'62**, interim minister at Edgewood UCC in East Lansing, Michigan, known for his astuteness in translating the biblical message into contemporary life and for his ministry of social concerns while serving churches in Ohio and Michigan, on November 9, 1999, from the effects of a coronary.

**Fred Hoskin, Oberlin BD'63**, of Troy, Ohio, at age 68, on October 1, 2000, from the effects of leukemia.

**Gerald B. Easley, MDiv'71**, of Nashville, Tennessee, at age 55 on December 31, 2000.

**Anthony LeRoy Dunnavant, MDiv'79, MA'81, PhD'84**, a native of Maryland and Disciples of Christ minister who served as dean and professor of church history at Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky, on February 8, 2001, from the effects of cancer.



*Believer*  
Tibetan pilgrim with prayer beads  
by Stacey Irvin, photographer, BA'98  
American (born 1976)  
recipient of the 1999 Margaret Stonewall Wooldridge Hamblet Award  
for outstanding achievement in studio art at Vanderbilt University  
chromogenic print  
11" x 14"  
courtesy of the artist

brushstroke calligraphy by Diane M. Jones,  
scribe, of Sewanee, Tennessee

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*“Although each of us can be defined by the brief physical time we exist on this earth,  
we have the ability to make that time extend beyond our brief physical existence.  
We are part of a collective consciousness,  
connected to each other by our work, images, thoughts, and writing.”*

—Maya Ying Lin  
(born 1959)

American architect and sculptor

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