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FALL 2003

THE SPIRE

Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Graduate Department of Religion, and Oberlin Graduate School of Theology



At the
BEDSIDE

THE SPIRE

Volume 24 • Number 1 • Fall 2003

F E A T U R E S



Genesis 7
2002
by Sylvia Hyman, MA'63
American sculptor
(born 1917)
stoneware and porcelain
12" height, 18" width, 10" depth
commissioned by Albert Werthan for
the faculty office of Jack M. Sasson,
the Mary Jane Werthan Professor
of Jewish Studies and Hebrew Bible
Vanderbilt University Divinity School
photographed by John Cummings

"In the **SIX HUNDREDTH YEAR** of Noah's life,
in the **SECOND MONTH**,
on the **SEVENTEENTH DAY** of the month,
on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth,
and the windows of the heavens were opened.
The rain fell on the earth **FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS.**"

—GENESIS 7:11 NEW OXFORD ANNOTATED BIBLE

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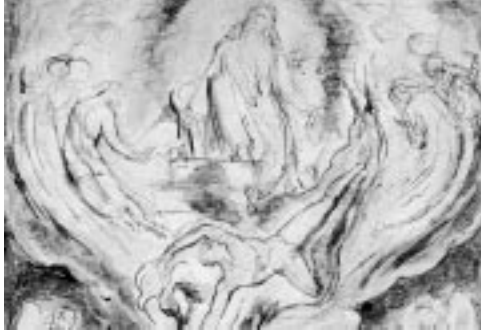


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Our Featured Artisans

Painting Without Borders

The epiphanal moment occurred in Borders Books. Employed as a “night shelve” in the Atlanta store, Benjamin Roosevelt was assigned to the art section where he arranged volumes alphabetically from Ansel Adams to Francisco de Zurbarán. When the night manager was not looking, Roosevelt would take the books on Pablo Picasso or Jean Michel Basquait from the shelves and study the paintings of the twentieth-century artists while standing in the aisles.

As he was shelving books one morning at 3:00, Roosevelt decided that if he were to respond to a calling to paint, he had to stand before an easel instead of a bookshelf. Unannounced, he walked out of the store and drove from the parking lot; his final glimpse of Borders was reflected through his rearview mirror.

After he made his egress from the world

of alphabetized retail, Roosevelt returned to the idyllic setting of his undergraduate years, Sewanee, to live a rather meager existence by working on a flower farm. But life on the mountain also afforded him opportunities to explore painting, an interest that had haunted him since earning a baccalaureate in religion at the University of the South in 1998. During the four years he has been painting, he has experimented with landscapes, portraits, and conceptual compositions. The 28-year-old native of Kingsport, Tennessee, now practices his avocation in a renovated attic in his east Nashville home that he shares with his wife, Elizabeth, a teacher at the Waldorf School. During the summer, he was invited to exhibit his paintings at the Zeitgeist gallery in Hillsboro Village, his first showing in a private gallery.

To fulfill the requirements for the master

of theological studies degree, Roosevelt secured a field education placement in the Office of Cultural Enrichment at Vanderbilt University Medical Center where he develops projects in art for long-term care patients. “Art has the power to render raw religious data because the expression of an individual’s creative urge reveals insight into one’s humanity and spirit,” states Roosevelt, whose painting *At the Bedside* depicts the moment in a circumthanatological scene when a person’s finite nature can no longer be sustained by curative therapy and the mystery of grace intercedes—that interval described by James Pace, a professor of nursing at the University and an Episcopal priest, as “a sacramental beauty.”

When Roosevelt is not in his studio, a patient’s hospital room, or the Oberlin Quadrangle, the artist may be found shelving oversized art books on the eighth floor of the Jean and Alexander Heard Library, a place he finds more compatible with his temperament than the aisles of a mall store. Upon earning his degree from the Divinity School, Roosevelt hopes to pursue a vocation in pastoral care that incorporates the visual and medical arts with healing ministry. —VJ



Benjamin Trefz Roosevelt, MTS2

On the Cover

At the Bedside
2003
by Benjamin Trefz Roosevelt
American painter
(born 1975)
acrylic and water-based oils
on paper
22 1/2" x 30"

The original painting hangs in the faculty office of Trudy Stringer, associate director of field education and lecturer in church and ministries at the Divinity School.

Scriptural Clay

Of all the materials with which sculptor Sylvia Hyman, MA’63, has worked, clay remains her favorite medium. “I have painted and worked with metal, but once I discovered clay in 1958, I believed I had found the solution to all that I had been seeking; however, I soon discovered that clay was not the answer to my quest but the beginning because I never run out of ideas for the medium,” states Hyman, whose ceramic sculptures are currently exhibited in her first solo show in Manhattan at the prestigious OK Harris Gallery in SoHo.

Her creations in the trompe l’oeil genre demonstrate how clay can imitate wood, fabric, and paper, and a remarkable example of Hyman’s ability “to fool the eye” may be seen in the faculty office of Jack Sasson, the Mary Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Studies and Hebrew Bible. The sculpture *Genesis 7*, commissioned for Sasson’s office by Vanderbilt University benefactor Albert Werthan and depicted on the inside cover of this issue, features silk-screened scrolls with underglazed texts recounting the Flood. “I silk-screen the design while the clay remains wet,” she explains, “then I bend and shape the clay to create the effect of a scroll or a book.”

Upon seeing *Genesis 7*, Susan Ford Wiltshire, professor of classics and chair of the department of classical studies at the University, observed, “The oldest stories represented in *Genesis 7* are those that were saved in cuneiform on clay. Part of the genius of Sylvia Hyman’s sculpture is that it preserves all these versions of the story in the enduring form of clay.” The creative life of the 85-year-old artist is the subject for one of Wiltshire’s poems in her latest book, *Windmills and Bridges: Poems Near and Far*.

A graduate of Buffalo State College in New York and George Peabody College for Teachers, where she served on the faculty of the art department, Hyman’s sculptures also have been exhibited in Greece, Germany, Canada, Japan, and the Czech Republic. She is the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award in Craft Arts from the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.



EVOLUTIONARY ARTIST

for Sylvia

Porcelain is the purest clay, kaolin decomposed where it lay, gathering no alloy along the way, fine as old wine, pliant, elegant—like her.

No dilettante, she knew she was an artist from the age of eight, claimed her calling full-time when time allowed, mentor to many then and now.

She traveled, taught, could not conceive a day when the magic of her fingers would resist rolling the tiny beads she was famous for.

After arthritis, she smiled, invented new ways of rolling clay, forming scrolls compelling as Qumran, stacked in piles, gathered in baskets real as gardens.

Over eighty now, her racing hands cannot keep pace with her laughing imagination, her evolving art, curious as chromosomes, surprising as genes.

—Susan Ford Wiltshire

FROM *Windmills and Bridges: Poems Near and Far*,
PAGE 44, EAKIN PRESS, AUSTIN, TEXAS, 2002,
REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER



Sylvia Hyman, MA’63

Photograph by Virgil Fox
(first published in the Nashville Scene,
May 22, 2003, page 62, reprinted with
permission of the photographer)

Readers' Forum

From the Editor

In Flannery O'Connor's short story "The Displaced Person," the protagonist, Mrs. McIntyre, arranges with a Roman Catholic priest to employ a family of Polish refugees, or displaced persons, on her Georgia dairy farm. When the elderly cleric, Father Flynn, begins to provide Mrs. McIntyre unsolicited instruction in the catechism, she rebuffs his efforts at conversion and exclaims, "I'm not theological. I'm practical."

For the 204 students who are pursuing graduate education this fall at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, the adjectives *theological* and *practical* are not antithetical but complementary of each other. Whether the students are attending a lecture in the Oberlin Divinity Quadrangle, serving a congregation, or working in a nonprofit service agency, they are investigating the questions which emerge when their faith traditions confront the perspectives and problems of contemporary life. At the Divinity School—an institution that is "committed to intentional diversity," a phrase attributable to Associate Dean Alice Hunt—the students are encouraged to explore strategies for questioning and reconciling the theological tenets of their traditions with the practical challenges of participating in a pluralistic society.

In this issue of *The Spire*, we present a series of reflections upon the practical and theological question, "What is a good death?" The inspiration for this theme stems from a symposium sponsored by the Vanderbilt University Medical Center's department of pastoral care during the spring semester when the question was addressed by ethicists, philosophers, and pastoral caregivers. Dean James Hudnut-Beumler suggested we examine the subject further by inviting representatives from within the School and the University to respond to the question.

I also am pleased to inform our readers that in February *The Spire* received the award of excellence for alumni/ae magazines at the District III Conference of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). We share this distinction with Duke University Divinity School and Furman University, and we remain grateful to Jenni Bongard, our designer from the University's Office of Creative Services, whose insightful understanding and artistic interpretation of the mission and commitments of Vanderbilt University Divinity School are demonstrated in each issue she creates for our community. —VJ

A Call to Restorative Justice

I appreciate receiving *The Spire* and look forward to each issue. I am prompted to write this letter regarding Christopher Kelly Sanders' article "Prophetic Diversity: A Vision for Heirs Through Hope" in the last issue, and I quote three sentences: "A university based divinity school is the ideal setting for exploring the connection between religion and social issues. A university's academic mission requires opening a dialogue for the mutual understanding among persons with different views. Sometimes a university's mission also requires a leadership role of moral witness that involves taking a clear position and making efforts to persuade others to see the new vision."

I applauded earlier an issue of *Vanderbilt Magazine* which opened the dialogue regarding capital punishment with two good articles presenting opposing views. Now I suggest it is time for an article or series of articles on "Restorative Justice" with the Divinity School taking a "leadership role of moral witness and making efforts to persuade others to see the new vision."

Mozelle A. Core, BA'46, MA'67
Nashville, Tennessee

Editor's Response:

The theme of restorative justice will be examined in an article by Lindsay Catherine Meyers, MDiv2, which will be published in the next issue of *The Spire*. During the 2003 spring

and summer terms, students from the Divinity School, David Lipscomb University, and members of the Nashville community participated in a course titled "Theology, Politics, and Criminal Justice in America" which was taught at Riverbend Maximum Security Prison. Inmates from Riverbend were permitted to enroll in the course and to explore with the students the theological implications of the American justice system. A course titled "Theology From Inside Prison Walls" will be offered again in the 2004 spring term when participants will examine the writings and lives of individuals who have been imprisoned for their faith or who have discovered faith during their incarceration.

Remembering Professor Mills



Thanks for *The Spire's* tribute to Liston Mills with whom I had worked on a study focusing on stress management. Now that I am living in the region, I look forward to sharing in the continuing edu-

education opportunities of the Divinity School and Graduate Department of Religion and becoming acquainted with the current faculty under the leadership of Dean Hudnut-Beumler.

Robert H. White Jr., BD'64, DD'70
Jackson, Tennessee

The administration, faculty, and staff of

Vanderbilt University Divinity School

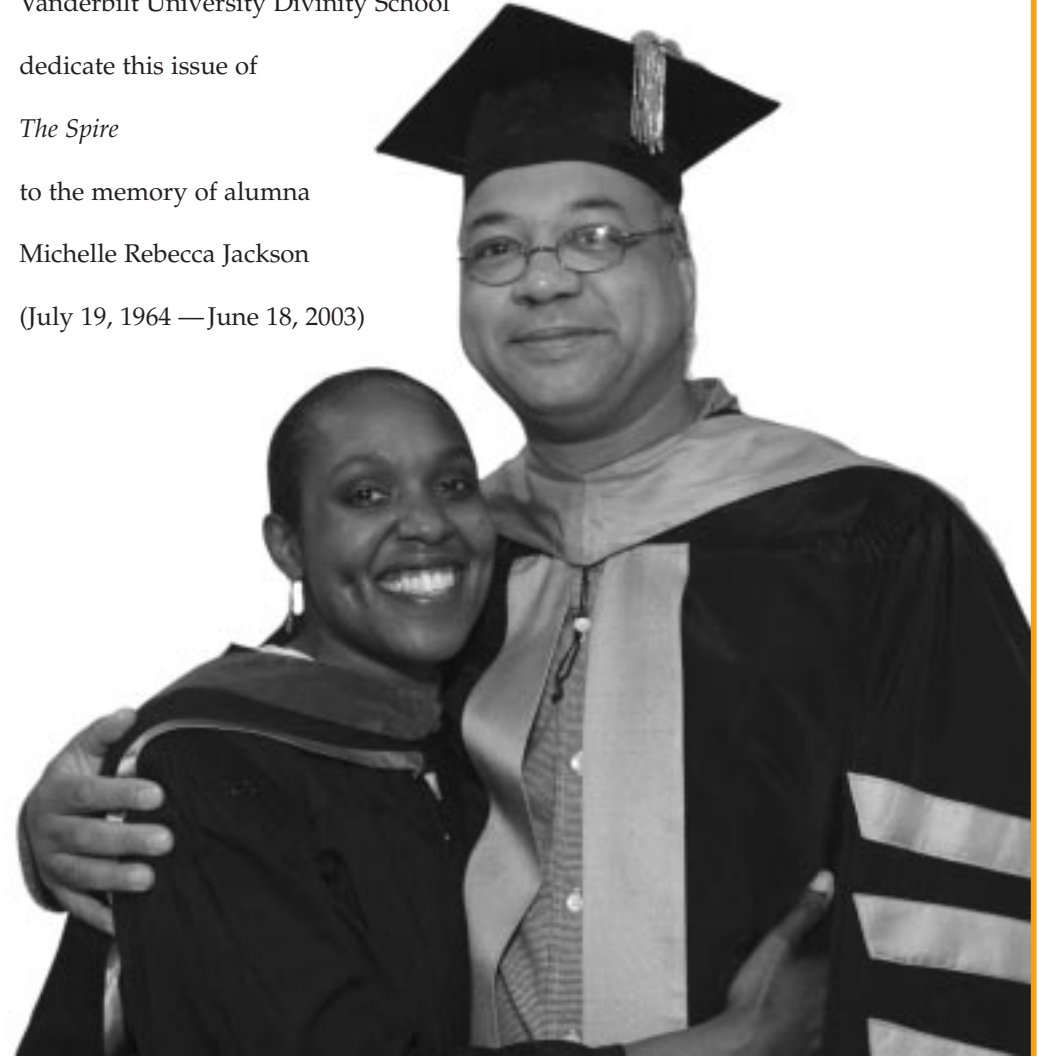
dedicate this issue of

The Spire

to the memory of alumna

Michelle Rebecca Jackson

(July 19, 1964 — June 18, 2003)



or my quest continues, but I am no longer on a journey where I will fall blindly into ditches. My path is lighted by God.

—from the biographical essay of Michelle Rebecca Jackson dated October 31, 1998, upon applying for admission to Vanderbilt University Divinity School

Diane M. Jones, scribe, of Sewanee, Tennessee, created the initial "F" in the Neuland style by using a flat brush and 1mm technical marker. Her design was inspired by a handwoven African basket. The photograph of Michelle Rebecca Jackson and Victor Anderson, associate professor of Christian ethics, African American studies, and religious studies, was taken by Donn Jones during Commencement 2003.

Navigating Beyond the Headlines



Practical Theology & Perennial Questions

BY CHRISTOPHER K. SANDERS, MDIV'95
Director of Development and Alumni/ae Relations

Fragments of practical theology have dominated newspaper headlines this past summer. Questions of who can be married and who can lead the Church have troubled Christians of all varieties for the last few months. The combined effect of a court decision in Ontario, Canada, that grants same-sex couples the right to marry and the U.S. Supreme Court case Lawrence v. Texas that struck down state sodomy laws has suddenly pushed forward the question of same-sex marriage upon a polarized North American political culture.¹ In what seems to be a coincidence, the confirmation of the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church has reopened questions of ecclesiology that connect to issues of calling, leadership, inclusion, and the authority of Scripture.

The responses to these developments have become the stuff of headlines as well. In the marriage debate, one Protestant senator shocked many other Protestants with a practical theology sound bite when he referred to marriage as a sacrament. In other cases, the response has been more systematic; the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* provides an example of a sustained critique of existing and prospective developments.²

The confirmation of the Reverend Canon V. Gene Robinson to the episcopate has elicited a similar variety of reactions. Although only one of many issues debated at this year's triennial convention of the Episcopal Church, the bishop-elect's sexuality was the only item that received any coverage. One bishop opposing Canon Robinson's confirmation based his views on a contrasting of morality and civil rights. Proponents, however, often spoke of the action of the Holy Spirit and God "doing something new."³ Commentators have generally described the debate as civil, but it remains to be seen how civil the differing sides will remain as new strategies take shape.

The issue of sexuality is the obvious connecting factor in these controversies, but the other bridge is the fact that they are both matters of practical theology. Whose relationships are blessed by God? How do religion and government share or divide responsibility

in sanctioning relationships? And what kinds of relationships qualify or disqualify one for leadership in a religious community? Beyond these basic questions are the types of arguments that are made. Some participants in these debates appeal to Scripture, specific passages as well as a more general biblical theology. Others make arguments from a morality construed from natural law. Still others draw upon more explicitly theological language pertaining to the nature of the sacraments, which include marriage and ordination in some traditions, as well as theological understandings of the action of God. Finally, others debate a morality of divine prohibitions versus an inclusive ethic based on the life and ministry of Jesus. Ordination and marriage may disappear from the headlines, but they are persistent concerns for the Church. Debating whether to call either act a sacrament, determining who may marry whom, and discerning what is required of bishops and other ministers are all perennial questions for the Church. The variety of theological, cultural, and moral vocabularies to which interested parties appeal as they make their arguments will likely be a permanent feature of our religious landscape, too. A thorough grounding in practical theology is as important as ever for the preparation of ministers and those who teach them if religious leaders are to navigate these controversies with vision and integrity.

Fortunately, generous benefactors have provided Vanderbilt University Divinity

School with a superb collection of resources that make it possible for us to prepare our students to exercise their ministries in challenging situations and reflect upon those experiences. Gifts from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation have endowed scholarships, two faculty chairs, and the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality. Our students have the opportunity to prepare for ministry by participating in seminars sponsored by the Carpenter Program while taking classes on liturgy offered by the Luce Chancellor's Professor of the History of Christian Worship and the Arts. These same students may have just taken part in a program made possible by the same donor, the Henry Luce Foundation, which provided the funding for our efforts to globalize theological education through student travel to Nicaragua, South Africa, Thailand, and Namibia. Building on the traditional disciplines of theology, ethics, Church history, and Bible, Vanderbilt Divinity students examine the practices of pastoral care, preaching, worship, and religious education in light of emerging issues of gender, sexuality, and globalization.

Ministry will always be hard work and seldom as glamorous as international travel. Negotiating with parish committees, providing pastoral care to an aging and ailing population, persuading adults that religious education is not just for children, and launching stewardship initiatives will often be thankless, challenging tasks. The mechanics of these functions grow stale, not merely because of the inertia ministers face as they attempt to implement such projects, but also because ministers have had so little opportunity for theological reflection upon these practices. Without the element of reflection, there is no practical theology. Without practical theology, ministers can lose sight of the scope and purpose of their practices. Furthermore, the contexts in which ministers serve the people of God are changing. Even if American ministers never leave the United States, the world is coming to them through demographic changes in every region of the country. So the practical theology that will best serve the next generation of ministers will encourage them to scan a broader world of religious dialogue and international financial and labor markets.

While there are no easy guides to the best new thinking in practical theology, current and emeriti/ae faculty as well as alumni/ae have written some imaginative and helpful works in the field. A partial list follows:

David Buttrick. *Speaking Jesus: Homiletic Theology and the Sermon on the Mount*

Leonard Hummel. *Clothed in Nothingness: Consolation for Suffering*

John McClure. *Other-wise Preaching: A Post-modern Ethic for Homiletics*

Bonnie Miller-McLemore. *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective*

Edward Farley. *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry*

L. Susan Bond. *Contemporary African American Preaching: Diversity in Theory and Style*

Dale Andrews. *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*

Robin Jensen. *Understanding Early Christian Art*

Many of these selections will be available in local bookstores, and all of them are available through online booksellers. The students and faculty of Vanderbilt Divinity School hope you will continue to take part in the conversation about the kinds of practical theology that will renew ministry and bring reconciliation.

¹See www.lambdalegal.org/binary-data/LAMBDA_PDF/pdf/236.pdf.

²See www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/doc_doc_index.htm.

³To see a complete set of pastoral letters issued by bishops of the Episcopal Church in light of Canon Robinson's confirmation, go to home.comcast.net/~jason.green/pastoral.html.



Dean James Hudnut-Beumler and the faculty of Vanderbilt University Divinity School welcome the following new members to our donor society, *Schola Prophetarum*:

Thompson Patterson Sr. and Michael Eldred
M. Douglas Meeks and Blair Meeks
Randy Smith and Beth Pattillo

To learn more about joining *Schola Prophetarum*, please contact Christopher Sanders in the Development Office at 615/322-4205 or at christopher.sanders@vanderbilt.edu.

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

2004 Relevant Religion Lecture Series

Vanderbilt at Scarritt-Bennett Center
1008 19th Avenue, South

Monday evenings
January 19, 26; February 2, 9

"Prophetic Responses to Racism"

with Forrest E. Harris Sr., MDiv'83,
DMin'91, assistant professor and director of the
Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies

Monday evenings
March 1, 15, 22, 29

"Theology & Civic Empowerment"

with Victor Anderson,
associate professor of Christian ethics, African
American studies, and religious studies

Tuition for each Relevant Religion Lecture Series is \$50, and continuing education units (CEU) are available. To obtain information regarding registration, you may call 615/340-7543, write to spiritus@scarrittbennett.org, or log on to www.vanderbilt.edu/divinity.

Community Breakfasts

Thursday, January 29

"Good is in the Details: Ethical Formation 101"

with Melissa Snarr,
assistant professor of ethics and society

Thursday, February 26

"Preaching by What Authority?"

with John McClure,
the Charles G. Finney Professor of Homiletics

Thursday, March 25

"Cuba after Forty Years: Reflections on Going Home"

with Fernando Segovia,
professor of New Testament and early Christianity

The Divinity School community breakfasts begin at 7:30 in the University Club and conclude at 8:30; the cost is \$10. Reservations are required and may be made by calling 615/343-3994.

From the Dean



Dean James Hudnut-Beumler

To Err on the Side of the Doves

On the Sunday following Easter, the Gospel lesson in our church was the story of doubting Thomas. As is often the case, the children's sermon was a preview to the theme of the sermon—in this case, identity. I asked my eight-year-old son if he would like to go forward for time with the children. He passed on the chance and remained in the pew. The minister talked about drivers' licenses, passports, fingerprints, and other ways we identify people.

She then asked the children how they would recognize Jesus, without an ID. One came up with a great idea. She said, "Because of his long hair." The minister had to point out that the other disciples probably had long hair, too. So we watched as one boy got one of those "idea looks" on his face and began pointing to his palm. Called upon, he delivered the expected answer, "From the nail holes in his hands." The minister beamed. Her work was done.

My son, Adam, however, leaned over to me and asked, "How did they know it wasn't one of the two thieves?"

At this interval of the service, I was glad Adam was still in the pew. Later it occurred to me that a graduate theological education is the process of learning to ask irreverent but faithful questions.

The truly wise person, goes the ancient proverb, is the one who knows what one does not know. It seems ironic that one should emerge from two or three years of course work with even more questions about God and humanity, good and evil, creation and chaos, than one had before enrolling at the Divinity School. It seems ironic, but it is inevitably the case, that the more one knows, the more one wants to know and that deep and deepened faith are accompanied by a deep thirst for knowledge. My first charge to you as students at VDS is to help other people find what I hope you will discover during your studies—not quick and facile answers—

but deep wisdom. Do not let your status as a Divinity School student result in your becoming a "slick answer" person.

Jesus himself told hearers to seek to be as "wise as serpents and as innocent as doves." This, too, is good counsel for today, for the world in which we live needs a healthy dose of skepticism from its religious leaders. I have never experienced a church, university, or agency that did not have a need to have its pretensions occasionally punctured with the critical insight of reason. One of the principles I hope you take with you into the places where you will eventually work and serve is the conviction that faith is deepened, not cheapened, by critical examination.

But let not the serpent have the last word; rather, remember the doves as you go forth from this place. Doves are symbols of peace, innocence, and signs of the spirit of God. When there seems to be a choice between snakes and birds, I say, "Err on the side of the birds."

Theologians and theological schools like to talk about a critical embrace of the faith. The doves are a reminder that the embrace of faith is the important issue. "Embrace" is the substantive term, which "critical" modifies but must never overwhelm. Embracing faith is the fundamental purpose of this education we seek with you.

In our diverse religious traditions, there is at least one agreement worth remembering. Our deepest shared wisdom tells us that the spirit of God goes whither it will. Therefore, my final charge to you is to "follow the doves." You are becoming theologically educated not to be a cynic, but to be a lover of all that is true, good, and noble. So follow the doves where they lead you. Trust that between your intellect and your passion, you will have what you need to minister and fulfill the purpose of your Vanderbilt education. Remember the doves; think like a serpent, and go in peace.

Around the QUADRANGLE



MIKE ROBINSON, COURTESY OF OUT & ABOUT NASHVILLE

While members of Nashville's Metro Council deliberated on adding sexual orientation to the Metro Code on nondiscrimination, Fred Phelps, pastor of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, condemned supporters of the ordinance during a rally at the courthouse.

VDS Students Rally in Support of Ordinance

When members of the Vanderbilt University Divinity School community attended a rally in February at the Metro Courthouse to support the addition of sexual orientation to the Metro Code covering nondiscrimination in housing and employment, they and other supporters of the ordinance were heckled by Fred Phelps and five members of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas.

The 73-year-old pastor said he came to Nashville "to preach to the perverts who were blaspheming the word of God" and to protest "putting the imprimatur of government upon blasphemy and raising filth to a level of respect," a measure he believes will bring "the same results as Sodom got" and for which supporters of the ordinance "will pay for in dearest coin in eternity in hell." Phelps, whose previous protest in Nashville occurred at the funeral of Senator Al Gore Sr., was recently the subject of national headlines for his intention to install a \$15,000, six-foot granite monument in Casper, Wyoming, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of Matthew Shepard's murder and his "entrance into hell."

Divinity School Founder's Medalist Christopher Mark Ferrell, MDiv'94, was among the council members who endorsed the ordinance. When the vote to add sexual orientation to the code on nondiscrimination resulted in a tie, Vice Mayor Howard Gentry, who has remarked that there is no evidence of discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered employees of Nashville, cast his vote against the ordinance.

Pulling Together

The sanctuary at Saint Ann's Episcopal Church on a summer morning is filled with singing children. Before starting a long day of activities at Nashville's Freedom School, the children have gathered for *Harambee*, a Kiswahili word that translates, "Let's pull together."

Founded in 1964, Freedom School is a five-week summer education program coordinated nationally by the Children's Defense Fund and sponsored locally by Saint Ann's. While the nonprofit program focuses on enhancing reading and writing skills, the children participate in a variety of enrichment courses including music, dance, art, athletics, and weekly field trips. The parishioners in the east Nashville faith community also host parent-empowerment dinners each week for the students and their families.

Five Vanderbilt University Divinity School students worked at the Freedom School this past summer: Dawn Riley, MDiv3; Randall Duval, MTS2; Leigh Pittenger, MDiv3; Christophe Ringer, MDiv2; and Dana Irwin, MDiv2. Riley, the director of the program at St. Ann's, developed the idea to start a Freedom School in Nashville while working as a site coordinator at Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. After Saint Ann's accepted her proposal, Riley helped raise over \$30,000 through grant writing and local contributions.

Riley states the curriculum for the program is not religious in its orientation; however, Freedom School's commitment to the worth of each child complements the mission of Saint Ann's: "to seek and serve Christ in all persons."



Divinity School student Dana Irwin, MDiv2, and Freedom School student Kea Francis read from Alice Walker's *Finding the Greenstone*.



"I like Freedom School because of the songs and teachers," says Kyrionna Golliday as she poses for the camera.

A Family of No Outsiders

“Cornelius Vanderbilt gave his gift to found this University to heal the wounds of the Civil War, so being asked to come here is very apt,” explained Nobel Peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he spoke at Vanderbilt on April 16, 2003. Remembering the significant outcries of American college students against the racial apartheid that divided South Africa from 1948 until 1991, Tutu remarked, “Whenever I came to this country at the time universities were giving final examinations, the cockles of my heart suddenly warmed when I found students not engrossed in whether or not they would do well. They were assembling to protest their universities.”

The chairperson of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Tutu emphatically reminded the Nashville audience, “You in this country helped us to become free. You helped us to become a country that is seeking to be nonracial and nonsexist. You did not bomb us into liberation,” he remarked, alluding to the United States’ invasion of Iraq. “We became free nonviolently. It was a specific change, a regime change, done peacefully. They sat down; they negotiated; they debated. Our country was spared the bloodbath so many had predicted, and we demonstrated that there are other ways of dealing with difference, with disagreement, with conflict—the way of forgiveness, the way of compromise, the way of reconciliation. You can never get true security from the barrel of a gun.”

Tutu concluded his address, which was sponsored by the Vanderbilt Speakers Committee, of which the Divinity School is a supporter, by stating, “God says there are no outsiders in my family, and if we realized we were family, we would never see the casualties of war. We must embrace all—God says all.”



Above: Human rights advocate Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa, was a guest speaker at the University during the 2003 spring semester. “A major victory over a system of injustice would not have happened without the support of the international community,” said Tutu, when expressing his appreciation for the world’s assistance in helping repeal the apartheid laws.

First Honors

Left: Heather Renee Cash, MTS’03, of Princeton, Kentucky, received the Founder’s Medal for first honors in the Divinity School during commencement exercises on May 9. Vanderbilt University Chancellor Gordon Gee conferred the honor on Cash who earned the master of theological studies degree.

The 84th Founder’s Medalist in the history of the Divinity School, Cash enrolled at the University after she was graduated from Centre College where she received a baccalaureate in religion. At VDS, her interest in the role of religion in the global community motivated her to travel during the 2002 fall semester to Chiang Mai, Thailand, as a Henry Luce Foundation intern from the Divinity School’s field education department.

Assigned to the New Life Center in Chiang Mai, Cash worked with young girls from the Hill Tribes, the ethnic minorities living in the mountainous regions of northern Thailand. By teaching them basic life and work skills, she helped to provide the girls an alternative to a life of prostitution in Thailand’s sex industry.

Cash aspires to apply her theological education on an international level by pursuing a doctor of jurisprudence degree and eventually working in a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting women’s rights. In this commencement photograph, Cash receives the Founder’s Medal from Divinity School Dean James Hudnut-Beumler as Martha R. Ingram, chairman of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust, observes the presentation.



In Violation of God’s Law

United Methodist Bishop Melvin G. Talbert, an adjunct instructor of Methodist polity at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, served as spokesperson for the National Council of Churches in an antiwar television commercial produced by Win Without War, a coalition of organizations opposed to the invasion of Iraq.

The chief ecumenical officer of the United Methodist Church, Talbert was chosen for the commercial that appeared on CNN and Fox cable networks in New York and Washington, D.C. to emphasize the opposition to war from America’s mainstream churches. In an article by Alan Cooperman published on Friday, January 31, 2003, in *The Washington Post*, Talbert stated that he decided to make the commercial after Methodist leaders failed in their attempts to obtain a private audience with President George W. Bush, a member of the United Methodist denomination.

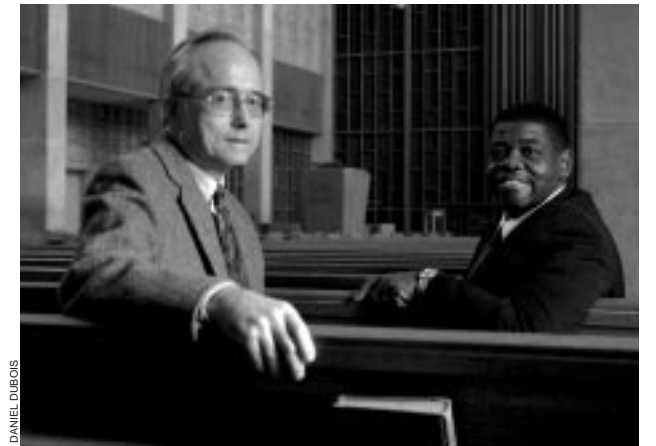
In the commercial, actor Janeane Garofalo asked, “If we invade Iraq, there is a United Nations’ estimate that up to half a million people will be killed or wounded. Do we have the right to do that to a country that’s done nothing to us?”

“No nation under God has that right,” explained Talbert in the advertisement. “It violates international law; it violates God’s law and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Iraq hasn’t wronged us. War will only create more terrorists and a more dangerous world for our children.”



COURTESY OF UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

Dale A. Johnson, the Drucilla Moore Buffington Professor of Church History and editor of *Vanderbilt Divinity School: Education, Contest, and Change*, has been elected to serve as president of the American Society of Church History. He is the first person from the University to serve in this office for ASCH. Johnson will be succeeded by president-elect Dennis C. Dickerson, professor of history in the College of Arts and Science. Founded in 1888, the American Society of Church History promotes the study of the history of ecclesiastical experience and the historical interaction between religious expression and culture.



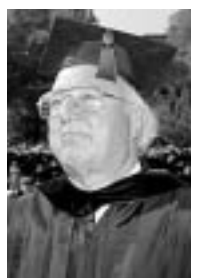
DANIEL DUBOIS



DANIEL DUBOIS

Melissa Peterson, MTS’03, a member of the Antoinette Brown Lecture Committee, presents a framed print created by artist Rashida Marjani Browne, MTS’99, to Mary C. Churchill, the 29th theologian to deliver the annual lecture at the Divinity School. “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Native American Women and the Question of a non-Christian Theology” was the subject of Churchill’s address. An assistant professor of women’s studies and religious studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder, she researches the complex historical and contemporary interaction between religion and gender in Native American cultures. Established in 1974 with a gift from Sylvia Sanders Kelly, BA’54, the Antoinette Brown Lecture commemorates the life of the first woman in the United States to be ordained to the Christian ministry. The 30th lecture will be delivered on Thursday, March 25, 2004, by the Reverend Doctor emilie m. townes, the Carolyn Williams Beard Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Donald F. Beisswenger, professor of church and community, emeritus, has been presented a national award from the Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association for his work of service to social justice. The organization honored Beisswenger for his work in industrial ministry, civil rights, homelessness, affordable rental housing, and third world debt. He also has received the Distinguished Citizens Citation from Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, on the occasion of his 50th anniversary of being graduated from the college.



VU Welcomes Guest Clerics



DANIEL DUBOIS



DANIEL DUBOIS

Above: When His Eminence Professor Demetrios Trakatellis, Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, visited Nashville during the summer for a regional conference for clergy and laity, he was the guest at a reception hosted by Nicholas S. Zeppos, provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs and professor of law, and James Hudnut-Beunler, dean of the Divinity School. Among the professors from the University community who welcomed His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and His Eminence Metropolitan Nichols of Detroit to the Divinity School were Dale A. Johnson, Mark Justad, Diane Sasson, Daniel Patte, Dean Hudnut-Beunler, Provost Zeppos, Lenn Goodman, Associate Dean Alice Wells Hunt, Jack Sasson, and Robert Drews.

His Eminence Professor Demetrios Trakatellis, Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, inscribes the Greek New Testament of Divinity School guest Shirley Kelley of Nashville.



DAVID CRENSHAW

Forrest Elliott Harris Sr., MDiv'83, DMin'91, director of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies and president of American Baptist College, was honored at the annual award dinner of the Nashville Opportunities Industrialization Center for his commitment to community organization and human rights. A past president of the Oak Ridge Branch of the NAACP, Harris was instrumental in helping to establish the Black Church Historian Society of Nashville and Tying Nashville Together, a grassroots interracial denominational advocacy group. He has served on the boards of the Nashville Center for Black Family Life, the Tennessee Citizen's Commission on TennCare, the United Way of Middle Tennessee, the Nashville Sports Authority, and the Ford Foundation Funded Project for Graduates. The mission of OIC is "to provide education, training, counseling, and job placement services for citizens of the community who are disadvantaged economically, educationally and socially; these services are provided to those who are unemployed or underemployed and lack the requisite skills to secure and retain jobs commensurate with their capabilities."

Shock and Awe of Another Persuasion

Divinity School Dean James Hudnut-Beunler was among the members of the Vanderbilt University community who spoke during a peace rally at on Wednesday, April 9, 2003, on Rand Terrace. The following excerpt is from his speech titled "Shock and Awe."

Shock and Awe did not work out the way it was planned. The Iraqis did not quit and welcome us with open arms. But it worked on me. I am shocked that my country is using preemptive war as a tool of maintaining its global hegemony. I am shocked that it is being wrapped up in a package of "Iraqi freedom." I am not only shocked, I am also awed. I am awed by the sight of Democrats lined up to say, "Me too." "Let's support our troops." "Let's make sure we win big time."

Here is the reason for my awe. It is as though no one in the government is taking the long view on preemptive war in a global context. Fundamentally, if you really care about the long-term future and safety of this country, the movement toward true freedom in oppressed nations ruled by dictators and dictatorial regimes, and the women and men who serve to defend the nation, you need to speak up for peace.

Last week, I saw in the *Vanderbilt Hustler* a cartoon which showed aging peace protesters holding their predictable signs. One protester asks another, "Psst, what's the latest news in the war?" The clear implication is that peace people should not care or pay attention to what happens to coalition forces or to Iraqis. Most of us want the Iraqis free from Baathist oppression. Most of us want minimal casualties and for our troops, at least, to behave decently toward prisoners of war and civilians.

But, and here's the crucial *but*: peace people know deep down there is a real danger in this war of attaining victory and losing the peace. We are, right now, undermining credibility with the Arab world and our allies. A clear victory in preemptive war is a clear and present danger to our values, to our statecraft, and to our troops.

...The 21st century is shaping up to be a struggle between people and groups who want to be free to believe and live as they wish and those who want to force people to live "the right way." This is the challenge of radical Islam to the secular West. The big picture is freedom versus force—not really faith against faith. Muslims can be good Americans, and God knows Christians can be very puritanical toward others.

"Every ambitious would-be empire clarions it abroad that she is conquering the world to bring it peace, security, and freedom, and is sacrificing her sons [and daughters] only for the most noble and humanitarian purposes. That is a lie; and it is an ancient lie, yet generations still rise and believe it."

—Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

...Freedom is not free; propagating freedom by a calculated policy of easy resort to force is self-defeating. But, you say, "There is a war on; what should I do?" Keep up the pressure. Delegitimate the strategy of preemptive force so that we get leaders who will pursue freedom with freedom's methods and not by parroting our long-term foes. If you care about the troops, if you care about your future security, if you care about the world—if you care about justice, true freedom, and peace—you will keep the pressure up before this pox-Americana destroys our way of life and all we hold most dear for all of humanity and not for just ourselves.

A Theologian of Mediation

Personal Recollections from Half a Century



BY PETER C. HODGSON,
The Charles Grandison Finney Professor of Theology, *emeritus*

When Peter C. Hodgson accepted an appointment to the faculty of Vanderbilt University, The Tennessean announced his arrival in an article titled "VU To Get Theology Aide: Hodgson Assumes Post September 1, 1965." During the 38 years of his tenure, Hodgson has distinguished himself as an educator whose teaching and research in historical and constructive theology has indeed "aided" the intellectual formation of each student who enrolled in his courses. A theologian

who demonstrated continual leadership in graduate education, Hodgson served three terms as chair of the Graduate Department of Religion and was a member of the Faculty Senate, the Graduate Faculty Council, the University Research Council, the Graduate Dean Search Committee, and the University Committee on Promotion and Tenure. Upon the occasion of his retirement in May 2003, the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust awarded the title "professor, emeritus" to Hodgson, and Divinity School Dean James Hudnut-Beumler established the Peter C. Hodgson Fellowship for a student enrolled in the Graduate Department of Religion.

I began reading theology exactly half a century ago. The first book of theology that I purchased was Paul Tillich's *The Protestant Era*, published in 1948 by the University of Chicago Press. I still have this volume with my name and the date 1953 inscribed on the inside cover, and I remember reading the book during the summer following my first year in college.

This was quite an extraordinary book for a 19-year-old to pick up and to read on his own. *The Protestant Era* resonated powerfully with me and still does 50 years later. The second book of Tillich's to be published in English after he came to the United States in 1933, it contains essays written between 1922 and 1945. I have reread the introduction he wrote for the collection, and I am amazed at the extent to which many of the questions I have been concerned with for 50 years are foreshadowed by it. Tillich describes how much his views were shaken by the events of World War II, and I think the book spoke powerfully to me because my generation, too, was shaken by those events and their aftermath, the Cold War. I still have vivid memo-

ries as a boy of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the battles of Europe and the Pacific, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Berlin Airlift, the spread of Communism, and the Korean War. I experienced all of these events from a safe distance, but Eva, my wife, experienced them at firsthand as a war refugee. One of the bittersweet ironies of life is that without the war we would not have met.

In *The Protestant Era* Tillich sets forth his idea of "the Protestant principle" (pp. xi-xvi). This principle, he says, had a special historical embodiment in Protestantism, even though it transcends Protestantism and is present in all the great religions of humankind. It expresses one side of the divine-human relationship—the other side being what Tillich came to call "Catholic substance" or "the sacramental principle." The Protestant principle, writes Tillich, "contains the divine and human *protest* against any absolute claim made for a relative reality, even if this claim is made by a Protestant church.... It is the guardian against the attempts of the finite and conditioned to usurp the place of the

unconditional in thinking and acting. It is the prophetic judgment against religious pride, ecclesiastical arrogance, and secular self-sufficiency and their destructive consequences" (p. 163).

Even if the Protestant era should come to an end, the Protestant principle will live on, for "it is the ultimate criterion of all religious and all spiritual experiences; it lies at their base, whether they are aware of it or not." It emerges out of the manifestations of the unconditional in the depth and breadth of experience. For Tillich, the *critical-prophetic* and the *sacramental-mystical* dimensions are closely connected. "Religion, like God, is omnipresent; its presence, like that of God, can be forgotten, neglected, or denied. But it is always effective, giving inexhaustible depth to life and inexhaustible meaning to every cultural creation." In the power of the New Being that is manifest in Jesus as the Christ, *critical* and *formative* power are united: God gives godself in a form that negates itself, the form of the cross (pp. xxii-xxiii). Heady words for a teenager, but they set the course of my life.

I went on to read that for Tillich the most important practice was the application of these ideas to the interpretation of history, and that history had been the central problem of his theology and philosophy since the end of World War I. This idea, too, resonated with me because I chose history as a major in college and became preoccupied with questions about the meaning of history. It is no coincidence that my second theological book was Reinhold Niebuhr's *Faith and History*, which also is inscribed with the date 1953. Although I majored in history, I took several courses in religion, and the classes taught by Paul Ramsey had the most powerful impact. Ramsey was a preacher at heart, and I still remember him perspiring profusely as he spoke with passion about Augustine and Kierkegaard. In the spring of my junior year I had a chance to meet Tillich and Niebuhr at a "seminary day" sponsored by Union Theological Seminary. It was a moving experience, but equally moving was a visit to the East Harlem Protestant Parish, and I had the naïveté to ask whether one could really consider Christian ministry as a vocation without a willingness to make the personal sacrifices required by such a ministry among the urban poor.

In any event, I chose to attend Yale Divinity School, not Union Theological Seminary. Yale was in its heyday and about to eclipse

Union where Tillich and Niebuhr had just retired. I studied with Robert Calhoun, H. Richard Niebuhr, Julian Hartt, George Lindbeck, Hans Frei, Claude Welch, James Gustafson—and this was just in the field of theology and ethics. I took several courses in Bible and was influenced by the three Pauls of the New Testament faculty: Schubert, Minear, and Meyer. Calhoun was one of the old Yale liberals and a truly brilliant scholar of historical theology: he quoted Greek and Latin texts from memory. Niebuhr also was formed by the liberal tradition and had written his dissertation on Ernst Troeltsch, but he was critically appreciative of the neoorthodoxy represented by his brother and a certain Swiss theologian. The "Young Turks"—Lindbeck, Frei, and Welch—were reading Karl Barth and espousing his ideas, which became the next powerful force in my theological education. I produced over a hundred single-spaced pages of notes on the *Church Dogmatics*. Although I wrote on Calvin and Tillich for my credo in systematic theology, Barth's influence remains with me to this day.

Before leaving Tillich, I would like to mention one other aspect of his thoughts that still impresses me. He states (in the introduction to *The Protestant Era*) that his theology is an attempt to overcome the conflict between liberal and neoorthodox theology. "It intends to show that the alternative expressed in those names is not valid; that most of the contrasting statements are expressions of an obsolete stage of theological thought." Theology based on the Protestant principle is liberal in its commitment to historical criticism, in its recognition that Christianity cannot be considered in isolation from the religious, cultural, psychological, and sociological development of humanity, in its rejection of any dualism between nature and grace, and in its affirmation of the humanism of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. But it is orthodox in its regard for Scripture as the revelation of God, in its recognition that the history of religion and culture is a history of permanent demonic distortions of revelation and idol-

atrous confusions of divinity and humanity, and in its belief that estranged humanity can be saved only by the reconciling act of divine self-giving (pp. xxvii-xxviii). It is just this creative liberal-orthodox tension that is weakened or destroyed, so it seems to me, by the deconstructive, postliberal, and radically orthodox theologies in our own time. I remain, like Tillich, a theologian of mediation.

I was reinforced in this orientation by my doctoral dissertation, which was a study of the nineteenth-century historical theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur to whom I was introduced by Paul Schubert. This was my first sustained effort to reflect theologically on the meaning of history. Through Baur I also had virtually my first exposure to Hegel. I say "virtually" because my first exposure came through a very eccentric visiting professor at college. In a course on nineteenth-century philosophy, he was still lecturing on Hegel in December; only then did he profess to learn that this was a one-semester, not a two-semester course. Some would say that

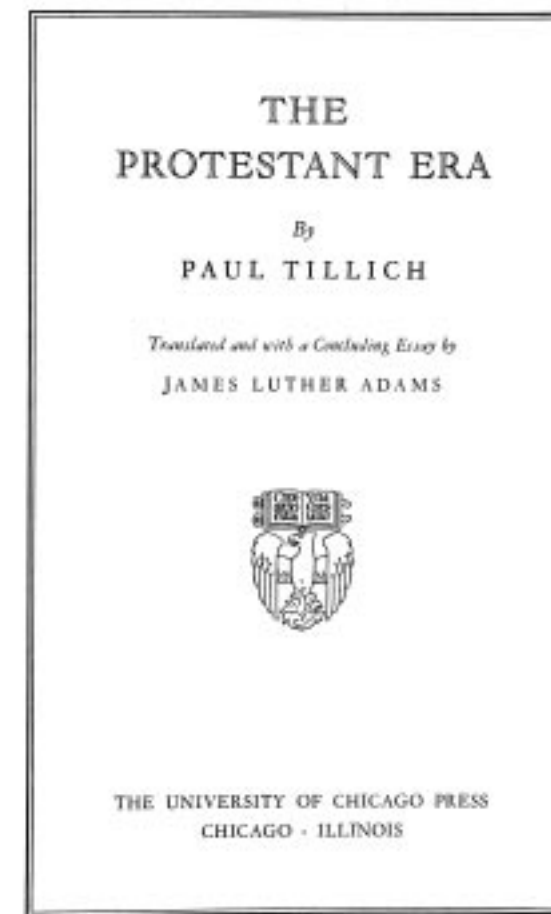
my own later preoccupation with Hegel reflects a similar mental confusion. Hegel does have a Puck-like capacity to cause people to lose their senses.

But this is getting ahead of the story. Before I continue further I would like to mention that Eva and I met at a Student Christian Movement conference in Maine in June of 1958. She was in the discussion group I was leading and could quote Bultmann and other German theologians due to her studies with Leander Keck, a former Vanderbilt Divinity School faculty member who began his career on the faculty of Eva's college. Moreover, she could quote the theologians in German. This was quite impressive, but equally impressive was the presence of Eberhard Bethge as the keynote speaker, who told us about his editorial work on the papers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which were just then being published.

A Second Theological Education

After two years of teaching in San Antonio, Texas, I came to Vanderbilt Divinity School in the fall of 1965. One anecdote about Texas: We drove out into the Texas hill country and Eva asked, "Where are the hills?" So we moved to Middle Tennessee where there are certifiable hills. Here at VDS I experienced a new set of exposures and challenges. Through the influence of Ray Hart and Robert Funk, I began reading Heidegger and became interested in the post-Heideggerian "new hermeneutic" represented by Heinrich Ott, Ernst Fuchs, and Gerhard Ebeling. Ebeling especially impressed me because of his engagement with questions of faith and history. I decided to take my leave in 1968-69 at the University of Tübingen, only to discover that Ebeling was departing for Zürich. In Tübingen I attended lectures by Ernst Käsemann, Jürgen Moltmann, and Hans Küng and participated in the very active *Ausländerkolloquium*, which heard the inside story of Küng's struggles with the Vatican, of Moltmann's involvement in the Christian-Marxist dialogue, and of Käsemann's participation in liberation movements. These were turbulent times, and the University was shut down for a good part of the spring by student strikes.

Situations were changing, too, at home. In the spring of 1968 practically the whole Divinity School went to Memphis to march after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. His death was followed by the assassination





Portrait of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) by Bollinger after Christian Xeller Hegel-Archiv der Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Lawson had been expelled for leading the Nashville sit-ins. This course changed my life in many ways because it exposed me to the history and literature of black religion and made me aware of the depth and intransigence of racism. A couple of years later I tried to work out my own theology of liberation in a book called *New Birth of Freedom* even as I became aware of my complicity in the very problems I was trying to solve. I have described this period in my life from 1968 to 1974 as the loss of innocence and my second theological education.

The Holistic Vision of Hegel

My preoccupation with Hegel began in the late '70s. This was partly motivated by a course I was teaching on nineteenth-century theology. But I was also searching for a philosophical framework in relation to which I could think theologically. I was attracted for a while, as I have mentioned, to Heidegger and the new hermeneutic, but they proved to be inadequate as my interests turned to liberation theology and questions of praxis. The formal categorical scheme of process philosophy did not seem to work well with my basically historical mentality, but I began to view myself as a kind of process thinker, and I have been influenced especially by John Cobb.

Hegel offers a holistic vision that is at once ontologically radical and socially transformative. The ontological radicalism provides a way of reconstructing the concept of God in light of the critiques of modernity and postmodernity—a reconstruction that avoids the dualism of classical theism, the monism of modern atheism/secularism, and the fragmentation of postmodern deconstruction. The social transformation is rooted in a vision of freedom as the goal of history and

in a dialectical method that demands a critique of all existing forms of thought and praxis, including its own. It is a version of Tillich's Protestant principle. For about a decade I was involved in editing and translating a critical edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Now, twenty years later, I am writing a monograph on *Hegel and Christian Theology* that offers a theological interpretation of the lectures. I had thought that by now someone else would have taken up this task, but it seems to have been left to me; furthermore, I am testing what I call Hegel's non-totalizing holism against the critiques of Levinas and others.

From the late '80s into the first year of the new millennium, I wrote works in constructive theology: *God in History*, *Revisioning the Church*, *Winds of the Spirit*, *God's Wisdom*, and *Christian Faith: A Brief Introduction*. These works have had, I am afraid, only a modest impact, and it is clear that I have not succeeded in igniting a theological vision for the new millennium. Perhaps such a vision is simply beyond the reach of our time. I also ventured across disciplinary boundaries with a study of theology in the fiction of the Victorian novelist George Eliot (Marian Evans), who I believe was a profoundly religious thinker. In this connection I discovered that literary critics are not eager to have their territory invaded by a theologian, and several of them panned the manuscript. John Bowden of SCM Press accepted it, saying that he recognized George Eliot in what I had written whereas he did not recognize her in several recently published biographies. I concluded from this experience that the rhetoric about interdisciplinary study is often just that, rhetoric. Disciplinary boundaries and guild interests are still protected with an almost religious fervor.

Three Tasks of Theology

If I had to put a label on my own thinking in the field of theology, I would call it *radical liberalism* rather than postliberalism or radical orthodoxy. A radical liberalism goes to the root (*radix*) of Christian faith and theology, which in my view is found in freedom—God's own freedom ("the One who loves in freedom," Karl Barth's wonderful phrase) and God's setting the whole creation free from bondage to futility and decay ("the glorious freedom of the children of God," the words of the Apostle Paul). A radical liberalism not only finds new ways to construct the central

themes of God, creation, and redemption (preserving the deep truth of the tradition by letting old forms pass away), but also addresses the most penetrating problems of its own time, seeking solutions that are both practical and visionary. These problems, as I see them, focus on the issues of social justice, ecological awareness, and peaceful dialogue.

I am intrigued by the possibilities of a liberation theology that finds the connections between social justice and eco-justice, of an ecological theology that is able to work out a new philosophy and theology of nature, and of a comparative theology opened up by

"The churches have been moving in the direction of confessional identity and homogeneity; the study of religion and theology has been moving toward diversity and pluralism. The exponential growth in predominantly conservative and fundamentalist forms of Christianity at the expense of critical and prophetic theology is painful to witness for a radical liberal such as I."

interreligious dialogue. These three tasks are, I believe, connected. For the first time in its history, Christian theology is in a position to engage seriously in the truths revealed by other religions. Tillich, in his last published writing, suggests that the whole of systematic theology will have to be rethought in light of the history of religions, and his own rethinking pointed toward a "religion of the Concrete Spirit." Concrete Spirit is crescent Spirit, coalescing into a great diversity of material and cultural forms but always standing out from them. Perhaps a way can be found to think about this idea, a way that does not prioritize, as Western theology has done, the rational and personal aspects of Spirit at the expense of its natural and impersonal aspects. Resources for this task are present in Eastern religions. The suffering of nature and of humanity is an experience common to all religions, and collaboration toward the overcoming of violence and the enhancement of justice is possible at the level of ethical practices even while theoretical questions remain open and productively unresolved. My next project, when I am finished with Hegel, may be to explore some of these possibilities.

What has been accomplished in half a century of theology? The main achievement, I think, is that an incredible diversity of pre-

viously silenced or marginalized voices has been heard: Latin American, African American, Hispanic, Asian, African, feminist, womanist, mujerista, gay/lesbian/bisexual. Theological discourse has been greatly enriched but also made much more complicated. We have come to appreciate the value of difference, but often at the price of no longer being able to grasp the whole or to articulate commonalities. We have come to recognize that our theological constructions are deeply shaped by our angle of vision, social interests, and cultural-linguistic identities to such an extent that we wonder whether our thoughts can

increasing numbers opted out of institutional Christianity entirely, discouraged by the intransigence and blindness of the church on many issues; thus, the mix of people making up congregations has shifted. The church is losing its vital center. This is partly a result of a failure in leadership: we have not recruited and trained in sufficient numbers the intellectually talented and ethically committed pastors who could hold and expand the center. Liberal theological education shares responsibility for this failure, but the solution, in my judgment, is not to reverse direction.

Vanderbilt University Divinity School has been at the forefront of liberal theological education for over half a century, and I have been privileged to be a member of the faculty for the past 38 years.¹ The Quadrangle has been a good place for me. I have had wonderful opportunities here and many good memories along with occasional frustrations. The special mix we enjoy between theological education and graduate studies in religion, in the context of a university with a wealth of resources, should be cherished and pre-

also be viewed in any sense as responses to the revelation of ultimate reality. Is our language, in Paul Knitter's deft phrase, a *prison* or a *prism*?

This burst of theological energy has been confined mostly to academic circles, and the gulf between academy and church seems deeper than ever. The churches have been moving in the direction of confessional identity and homogeneity; the study of religion and theology has been moving toward diversity and pluralism. The exponential growth in predominantly conservative and fundamentalist forms of Christianity at the expense of critical and prophetic theology is painful to witness for a radical liberal such as I. What has happened, I believe, is that moderate and liberal Christians have in



Portrait of the English novelist George Eliot (Marian Evans) (1819-1880) sketch by Samuel Laurence 1860 (misdated 1857)

served always. Much has changed, but some aspects remain the same. Faculty, staff, and student body are much more diverse, but the commitment to diversity has been present for a long time. Already in the late '60s and early '70s we were committed to the place of African Americans and women and to the close relationship between Judaism and Christianity in theological education; other commitments—such as those articulated in the Divinity School *Catalogue*—came later.

In a sense the whole trajectory of the School for the past 43 years was set by the Lawson crisis of 1960 when the Divinity School very nearly went under and when Vanderbilt University began to wake up to new realities. Strong leadership by people such as Lou Silberman, Walter Harrelson, Kelly Miller Smith, Sallie McFague, Peter Paris, Jack Forstman, Ed Farley, David Buttrick, Howard Harrod, Gene TeSelle, Dale Johnson, Frank Gulley, Don Beisswenger, Liston Mills, and Joe Hough—a list of near-saints (some closer than others to sainthood)—helped to get us to where we are today. Our present leaders, James Hudnut-Beumler, Alice Hunt, and Douglas Knight are taking us to new levels of accomplishment. So I am encouraged about the prospects for Vanderbilt Divinity School and the Graduate Department of Religion. Our contribution to the larger

scheme has been modest in numbers but strong in quality.

I have to tell you that I am not so encouraged by the prospects today for a theology that is able to effect actual changes in public policy in the direction of social justice, ecological responsibility, and peaceful dialogue. Powerful interests, political and economic, are too firmly entrenched to be much shaken by theologians, pastors, and professors who are more on the margins of society now than they were half a century ago. The church, insofar as it speaks publicly today, does so with a reactionary voice on many of the critical issues. Tillich hoped for a new *kairos* in our time. It has not come, but we should not cease to yearn for it. In the meantime we can, as George Eliot observed, work for the better if not the best.

¹ Recently I have been going through my files in preparation of vacating my office. I am reminded what a labor-intensive work teaching and scholarship is. All the correspondence relating to this or that project, all the manuscripts, all the committee documents and meetings, all the conferences and professional groups, all the course syllabi and bibliographies, all the lecture and reading notes, all the student files, all the recommendations and grading, all the dissertations, all stretching back 38 years! I am exhausted just to contemplate it. I have not kept a good record of all the things I have done, and most of the physical evidence will go to the University Archives where someday an industrious researcher can dig it all out—though I can't imagine why anyone would want to do it.