“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
Our Featured Artisans

Painting Without Borders

The epiphany 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 Joan Mitchell Basquiat from the shelves and study the paintings of the twen-
tieth-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. Unan-
nounced, 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 exis-
tence by working on a flower farm. But life on the mountain also afforded him opportu-
nities 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 land-
scapes, portraits, and conceptual composi-
tions. 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 Red Sea depicts the moment in a circumambulatological 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 nurs-
ing 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 Quad-
rangle, the artist may be found shelving oversized art books on the eighth floor of the Joan 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.

Scriptural Clay

O

n 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 presti-
gious 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 Sasser, the Mary Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Stud-
ies and Hebrew Bible. The sculpture Genesii 7, commissioned for Sasser’s office by Van-
derbilt University benefactor Albert Werthan and depicted on the inside cover of this issue, features silk-screened scrolls with underglazed tests 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 Genesii 7, Susan Ford Wil-
shire, 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 those 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 Wilshire’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.

OEVOLUTIONARY ARTIST

for Sylvia

Porcelain is the purest clay, kaolin decomposed where a leaf, gathering as alley along the way; fine as old wine, plain, elegant — like her. No dilettante, she knew the arnast from an artist of the age of sight, claimed her calling full-early, when time allowed, master to many true and now.

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

After arthritis, she smiled, invented new ways of rolling clay, forming scrolls compellingly as Qumran, stuck in piles, gathered in baskets red as gardenia.

Our reunion now, her racing hands cannot keep pace with her laughing imagination, her evolving art, curious as chromosomes, surprising in growth.

—Susan Fred Wilshire

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—a university that is “committed to intentional diversity,” a phrase attributable to Associate Dean Alice Hunt—those 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. Duan 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 District III Conference of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. 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 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.

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

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

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 Divinity: 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 connections 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.

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Editor’s Response:
The theme of restorative justice will be examined in an article by Lindsey Catherine Meyers, MDiv, 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 impressed for their faith or who have discovered faith during their incarceration.

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Remembering Professor Mills

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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 Dongard, 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. —V
DAVID CRENSHAW 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. 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. Such a controversy has prompted bishops and other ministers to ask themselves what principles and processes of the Church should guide their arguments and practice. These questions are relevant not only to the Episcopal Church but also to many other churches and denominations.

The issue of sexuality is the obvious connection, but it is also the most complex. Concerns about ordination and marriage are not new, and the language of “sanctioning relationships” and “disobedience” has been used in previous debates. Nevertheless, the language used in this debate is more than that. The language used in the “Types of Relationships and Marriage” section of the Virginia Report is a reflection of the language used in the debates over the ordination of women and the ordination of persons who are not married.

Throughout the debates over sexuality, the Church has been asked to decide whether it is possible to allow persons to marry and to lead the Church who are not married. This is a question that has been asked before, but the language used in the debates has been different. The language used in the debates over sexuality is more complex and more difficult to understand.

The Church has been asked to decide whether it is possible to allow persons to marry and to lead the Church who are not married. This is a question that has been asked before, but the language used in the debates has been different. The language used in the debates over sexuality is more complex and more difficult to understand. The Church has been asked to decide whether it is possible to allow persons to marry and to lead the Church who are not married.
To Err on the Side of the Doves

O n 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 disciple 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 hair. 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 need for knowledge. My first charge to you, as students at VDS, is 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 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 skeptisism from its religious leaders. I have never experienced a church, seminary, or agency that did not have a need to have its pretentions 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 serpents 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 overweigh. 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: One deepest shared wisdom tells us that the spirit of God goest whither it will. Therefore, my final charge to you is to “follow the doves.” You are becoming theologially 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.

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 75-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 deepest 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 $100,000, 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 Kwasahili 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, MDiv’3; Randall Duval, MST2; Leigh Pittinger, MDiv’3; Christophe Ringler, MDiv’2; and Dana Irwin, MDiv’2.

Riley, the director of the program at St. Ann’s, and 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.”
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 outposts 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 debated. Our country was spared the bloodbath so many had predicted. Do we have the right to do that to up to half a million people will be killed or wounded. Do we have the right to do that to our children."

"No nation under God has that right," said Tutu, when expressing his appreciation for the world's international community, "and that is why I have happened without the support of the coalition of organizations opposed to the invasion of Iraq."

When Tutu was named Nobel Peace laureate in 1984, he said, "I work with human rights and I have to work with them. I cannot afford to have human rights be only a commercial."

"We have to work with human rights. They are not only a commercial. They are a way of forgiving, the way of compromise, the way of reconciliation."

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 antiscor exempt 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 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."

First Honors

Left: Heather Renee Cash, MT’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 K. Ingram, chairman of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust, delivers the presentation.

In Violation of God’s Law

United Methodist Bishop Melvin G. Talbert argued against the invasion of Iraq during a National Council of Churches television commercial.

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Dale A. Johnson, the Drucilla Moore Buffaloing Professor of Church History and editor of Vanderbilt Divinity School: Education, Context, 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.

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First Honors

Left: Heather Renee Cash, MT’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 K. Ingram, chairman of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust, delivers the presentation.
VU Welcomes Guest Clerics

Above: When His Eminence Professor Demetrios Tzakaloff, 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-Beumler, dean of the Divinity School. Among the professors from the University community who welcomed His Eminence Metropolitan Nichols of Detroit to the Divinity School were Dale A. Johnson, Mark Justad, Diane Sassen, Daniel Patte, Dean Hudnut-Beumler, Procati Zappos, Leon Goodman, Associate Dean Alice Wills Hunt, Jack Sassen, and Robert Drees.

Shock and Awe of Another Persuasion

Divinity School Dean James Hudnut-Beumler 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.”

Shocked 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 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, “Past, what’s the latest news in the war?” The clear implication is that peace people should not care nor pay attention to what happens to coalition forces or to Iraqis. Most of us want the Iraqis free from Baathist rule, and peace—you will keep the pressure on us. 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.

...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. Delegitimize 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 post-Americano destroys our way of life and all we hold most dear for all of humanity and not for just ourselves.
Although I wrote on Calvin and Tillich sets forth his STEVE GREEN Graduate Department of Religion. Personal Recollections from Half a Century A Theologian of Mediation University Board of Trust awarded the title “professor, ing my first year in college. The Protestant Era, World War II, and I think the book spoke have been concerned with for 50 years are 1933, it contains essays written between 1922 that I purchased was Paul Tillich’s centennial ago. The first book of theology This was quite an extraordinary book for a life is that without the war we would not experienced them at firsthand as a and the Korean War. I experienced all of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the battles of Europe and the Pacific, the Korean War, the(World War I. This idea, too, resonated with me. “We cannot have a history of religious 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 “styled” the intellectual formation of each student who enrolled in his courses. A theologian who demonstrated considerable leadership in graduate education, Hodgson served three terms as chair of the Department of Graduate 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 Harnish-Beaumont established the Peter C. Hodgson Fellowship for a student enrolled in the Department of Graduate 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 1949. Then I was a student in 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 Eng- land 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 shaped by 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 after- math. The Cold War I still have vivid memo- nes as a boy of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the horrifying events of Europe: the Pacif- ist, 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 bitternesses intrinsic to 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–xii). 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 human kind. It expresses one side of the divine-human relation- ship—the other side being what Tillich came to call “Catholic substance” or “the sacramental principle.” The Protestant princi- ple, writes Tillich, contains the divine and human aspect against any absolute claim for a 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 prudent principle that restrains religious pride, ecclesiastical arrogance, and secular self-suf- ficiency and their destructive consequences” (p. xi). This is a critical-prophetic and critical-prophetic principle. 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 divine-human relationship—one of the nineteenth-century dimensions of experience. For Tillich, the critical-prophetic and the sacramental-spiritual 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 insusceptible depth to life and inexhaustible meaning to every cultural creation.” In the power of the Bing- ing 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. xxviii–xxix). Heart words for a teenager, but they set the course of my life. I went on to read that for Tillich the most important practical 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. “We cannot have a history of religious life without the war we would not have met. In The Protestant Era Tillich sets forth his idea of the “Protestant principle” (pp. xi–xii). 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 human kind. It expresses one side of the divine-human relation- ship—the other side being what Tillich came to call “Catholic substance” or “the sacramental principle.” The Protestant princi- ple, writes Tillich, contains the divine and human aspect against any absolute claim for a made for a relative reality, even if this claim is made by a Protestant church... 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Now, twenty years later I worked on, trying 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 Holy Vision of Hegel

My preoccupation with Hegel began with Hegel's "containment" of nineteenth-century theological truth. But I was also searching for a theological framework in relation to which I could think theologically. I was attracted to Hegel and the new humanities, but I have never been one to prove 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 with the new humanities, 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—"a reconstruction that avoids the dualism of classical theism, the monism of modern atheism/socialism, and the fragmentation of postmodern deconstruction. The social transformation is rooted in the vision of freedom as the goal of history and in a dialectical method that demands a critical engagement with the past and praxis, including its own. It is a version of Tillich's Protestant principle. For about a decade I was busy developing 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 thought that by now everyone else would have taken a fresh look at the text that has 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 '60s into the first year of the new millennium, I wrote works in constructivism and liberation theology: God in History, Revisiting 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 global south. 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 have written to me of this experience. SCM Press accepted it, saying that it recognized a need for another 'Religion of the Concrete Millennium.' Perhaps a way can be found to coalesce 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 hazards 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 when theoretical questions remain open and productively unresolved. My next project, when I am finished with Hegel, may be to explore some of these possibilities.

Three Tasks of Theology

If I had to put a label on my own theology in the field of theology, I would call it a "radical liberation rather than postliberalism or radical orthodoxy. A radical liberalism goes to the heart (soul) of Christian faith and theology, which in my view is found in freedom—God's making and not just observing. ("The glorious frame of the children of God,") the words of the Apostle Paul. A radical orthodoxy not only finds new ways to construct the central themes of God, creation, and redemption (preserving the integrity of historical form), but also addresses the most penetrating problems of its own tradition and thus appropriately translates the insights of the Enlightenment and the revolutions of the Christian tradition. In this light, I believe Hegel's thought is 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 of work and age, of a new philosophy and theology of nature, and of a comparative theology opened up by the loss of innocence and my second theological education.

The churches have been moving in the direction of confessional identity and homogenity; 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. I also believe in the possibilities of a liberating theology that is both practical and visionary. 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 thinking pointed toward a "religion of the Concrete Spirit." Concrete Spirit is concrescent 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 other religions. The suffering of nature and hazards 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 when 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
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 Hamiltron, Kelly Miller Smith, Sallie McFague, Paul Paris, Jack Forstman, Ed Farley, David Buttrick, Howard Harrod, Gene Telfele, Dale Johnson, Frank Gulley, Don Besawenger, Linton 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 encour-aged by the prospects today for a theology that is able to effect actual changes in public policy in the direction of social justice, eco-logical 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.

Recently I have been going through my files in preparation of writing this essay. I am reminded of 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 courses files and bibliogra-phies, all the lectures and reading notes, all the student files, all the recommendations and grading, all the dis-sertations, all stretching back 26 years! I am exhausted just to contemplate it. Have I kept a good record of all the things I have done, and most of the physical evidence will go to the University Archives when someday an industrious researcher can dig it all out—though I can’t imagine why anyone would want to do it.

When the Photograph Becomes the Picture

ESSAY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JASON DAVIS FRAZIER, MTS2

During the 2003 summer term, 15 representa-tives from Vanderbilt University Divinity School traveled to the border town of Nogales Sonora in Mexico for a field education immersion experi-ence in the political and economic circumstances that contribute to immigrants seeking better lives in the United States. The VDS-delegation, in con-junction with the nonprofit organization Border-Links, was led by Lloyd Lewis, assistant professor of the practice of ministry and assistant dean for student life, and included Andrew Barnett, Nathan Breun, Amy Cates, Brian Costilore, Moung Eam, Karlen Evins, Nancy Jenkins, Kae Kitzischwalt, Brian McCre-anor, Lindsay Meyers, Paul Noviak, Michele Rangel, William Simmons, and Jason Frazier, from whose journal this essay was compiled.

Two weeks have passed since I returned from Mexico, and I am just now picking up the photographs from the camera shop. I discover that one roll of film is ruined—probably from a faulty shutter on my camera. Somewhat perturbed, I get into my car and hurriedly flip through the photos. Something is missing.

The 105 pieces of photo-graphic paper in my hands reveal nothing of the experi-ences I had two weeks ago. As a student of theology, I think that having directly experienced the events depicted in these photos now alters my perception of the images and restricts their meanings. I am not completely convinced by that thought. I place the photos back in the envelopes and begin driving. I recall memories from the trip for what seems the millionth time: a 45-mile stretch of desert from Sasabe, Mexico, to the pick-up point in Arizona; immigrants, with little or no water, traversing a terrain of cactus and mesquite trees over three days. That’s not that big a deal, or is it? Temperatures soar from 110–120 degrees regularly with cloudless skies and an unrelenting sun. The area is home to rattlesnakes and coyotes. What would motivate people to endure willingly these conditions while leaving their homes and families, especially when they are aware of the risk of failure and the number of peo-ple who have died alone in the desert mak-ing this trek? Simple heat exhaustion or a sprained ankle will cause a person to become stranded and die. I cannot fathom this reality. Having never gone hungry or thirsty, having never experienced even a possible lack-ing of food or water, I am, despite having witnessed the circumstances on the border, aware of my inability to relate directly.

What value of border and separation can be worth these stakes? Life, liberty, and property? Is the United States so intent on making herself an island, only accepting the world’s commodities while ignoring the world’s hardships? If so, why? Homeland security? Currently I fear my home more than any other land—the land of the above. Stylized sculptures made by local artisans from recycled materials depict the struggles of the Mexican immigrants who try to cross the border into the United States. Left: Dreams of water placed by relief workers may be found on the American side of the border.