

GTU Currents

NEWS OF THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION

Crucial Conversations

GTU FACULTY AND ALUMNI REFLECT ON STEM CELL RESEARCH

Three years after President Bush's compromise decision allowing federally funded stem cell research on a limited number of cell lines, the question of this controversial research continues to spark heated debate. Both presidential candidates have spoken widely on the issue, reflecting its political weight as the November election approaches. At stake in the stem cell research debate are issues about what it means to be human and what role religious belief should, and does, play in public life. A wide spectrum of opinions on this complex question exists, underlining the necessity of open and authentic dialogue.

Since the idea of stem cell research was conceived in 1996, the GTU has been at the center of the ethics debate (see sidebar on p. 5). Faculty and alumni analyses of the nature of decision-making, community, and the meaning of human identity have deepened the scholarly and public conversations on stem cell research.

Human embryonic stem cells, which can develop into almost any type of cell in the body, could potentially replace diseased cells in people with diabetes, Parkinson's, heart disease, spinal cord injury, and Alzheimer's.

"Justice demands that we struggle passionately with the question of who it is that we do not see."

—Margaret McLean

Yet because embryos (obtained from in-vitro fertilization clinics) are destroyed in the process, stem cell research poses difficult moral questions for many people. The Vatican, for example, actively opposes this research on the grounds that it violates the fundamental respect due all human life, even in its earliest forms. For many religious groups, the potential medical advances of research do not justify what they perceive as the destruction of innocent life.

While a healthy diversity of viewpoints on this issue can be found at the GTU, many scholars offer a reasoned support for expanded stem cell research. Among these are current GTU faculty members Ted Peters and Michael Mendiola; Karen Lebacqz, who taught at PSR/GTU from 1973 to 2004; alumni Laurie Zoloth, Margaret McLean, Suzanne Holland, and Alan Kelchner; and Gaymon Bennett, a third-year GTU doctoral student.

The work of PLTS Interim President **Ted Peters** and **Gaymon Bennett** suggests a view of Christian anthropology—or what it means to be human—that can inform the debate. Rather than defining the source of moral selfhood in terms of conception, they argue that the dignity of the human person should be understood in terms of his or her future destiny in relationship to others. Because stem cell research has the potential to further the well-being of humanity, they argue, there exists a theological and ethical mandate to support it. The framework for their reflection is beneficence, "a selfless love of one's neighbor that inspires struggle against suffering and death."

Margaret McLean (Ph.D. '97) is director of biotechnology and healthcare ethics at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, and a religious studies faculty member at Santa Clara University. For her, issues of justice are at the center of the stem cell debate. From a public policy standpoint,

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Photos: CDSP President Donn Morgan, GTU students Lisa Webster and Abraham Kadaliyil

Founded in 1962, the Graduate Theological Union educates women and men in theological scholarship and church leadership. The GTU seeks to teach patterns of faith that nurture justice and peace, and to equip leaders for a world of diverse religions and cultures.



Dana Davis

Currents presents the news, people, and progress of the Graduate Theological Union. Published three times a year, *Currents* is distributed to alumni, faculty, students, staff, and friends of the GTU.

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Dear GTU Community:

Talk of religion and values is very much in the air this election year. Both George Bush and John Kerry realize how important religion and values are to citizens in the public square. Despite their fundamentally different approaches to the issue, each is seeking to embrace religious ideas and communities and to clothe their policy proposals with religious legitimization. While acknowledging that he doesn't wear his faith on his sleeve, Kerry insists that his faith has given him "values and hope to live by." Recently President Bush reiterated a consistent theme in his presidency: "I don't see how you can separate your faith as a person from the job of being president," he told CNN's Larry King. For the candidates and for voters, issues of faith are pervasive in the current political sphere. However, I find that the quality of the religious discourse is wanting.

The deficiencies in current public conversations on religion are particularly reflected in an oversimplified and reductionistic portrayal of religion itself. Frequently religion is depicted as either a privatized form of individual piety, or as a formal and rigid form of institutional attachment and observance. The real dynamics of religion and faith, with all the complexities and nuances entailed, seldom find their way into the public arena. Both presidential candidates, for example, appeal to a set of "values" that have strong religious undertones. Yet this discourse tends to assume a monolithic understanding of values that does not reflect the rich religious and spiritual diversity of the American people. Frequently discussions of religious values focus on narrowly defined issues, lacking a larger vision of their meaning for us as individuals and as a nation in the global community. Just because surveys show that over 80% of Americans consider themselves religious, does not justify pandering to the most trivial forms of religious understanding.

It is my hope that those of us in the GTU can use the tools of our trade to sift through the issues of our civil society so that we can see both the possibilities and limitations of religious and ethical ideas for our common life. I believe that one of the responsibilities of the GTU, and of all theological institutions as well, is to be a resource in the public arena for clear thinking about religion's role in society. Religious ideas and ethical values are premised on and convey some understanding of how we are related to one another, and how such values as justice, responsibility, trust, equality, solidarity are interpreted in the context of community. These issues are at the heart of our work at the GTU, as we seek to discover how religion can serve as a helpful and necessary tool in public discussion.

At the GTU many of our discussions this semester revolve around the relation of religion and politics. As you will see in this *Currents*, from the discussion on stem cell research, the research projects of our Newhall scholars, and the interview with Jerome Baggett, we take our public responsibilities as theologians on these matters seriously. Enjoy reading.

Regards,

James A. Donahue



Point of View: Globalization and Religion

This new *Currents* feature will present the perspectives of two member school presidents on a particular religious, social, or cultural topic. In this inaugural column, CDSP President Donn Morgan and ABSW President Keith Russell reflect on the religious and spiritual issues raised by the contemporary context of globalization. We welcome comments and ideas from readers for topics you would like to see addressed in future issues.

Globalization refers to the late-twentieth century phenomenon of increased interconnection between the economic, political, cultural, and technological aspects of communities around the world. While some believe in the educational and economic benefits of globalization, others cite the problems it creates or contributes to, such as the widening gap between rich and poor; environmental destruction; the enforcing of a Western neo-colonialism; the violation of human rights; the undermining of traditional cultural identities; and the encouragement of materialism. Particularly in light of 9/11 and the war in Iraq, issues surrounding the role of western economic and cultural influence and its relationship to religion are coming to the forefront of discussions on globalization.

Donn Morgan, President and Dean of Church Divinity School of the Pacific

Globalization within religious traditions offers the opportunity of sharing both differences and commonalities for particular traditions (e.g. the Anglican Communion) and for more inclusive organizations (e.g. The World Council of Churches). While such an opportunity promises dialogue and mutual learning in a world that seems in many ways to be smaller through globalization, this is not always achieved. As an Anglican, I am worried and distressed by the strident positions taken on important social and theological issues within the Anglican Communion by both "liberals" and "conservatives." Though I hope for dialogue and transformation, we have a long way to go. The model of the GTU as an interfaith and ecumenical consortium may offer an important witness to religious traditions seeking possible benefits of globalization; though we, too, must be open to other perspectives not found in plentitude here in Berkeley.

On September 11, 2001, I was made acutely aware of the positive and negative effects of globalization for my particular seminary community. A student from Brazil was greatly distraught, for while he ached

because of the loss of life in the attacks, he also knew about the hardships the World Trade Organization had created for the economy and standard of life in his country. Somehow, through prayer and grace, his perspectives were aired in the context of a worship service at CDSP on that day. In that moment, both the good and bad of globalization were brought together, allowing us to grieve, and perhaps, to hope for a different world.

I believe that religion should try to provide a counterweight to the economic and material emphasis of globalization.

Such an effort is congruent with the emphasis on globalization, educationally centered, of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), to which all GTU schools belong. Such an effort also calls us here in the GTU to have a public voice (another ATS emphasis) and to join in the efforts of our religious constituencies (e.g. the United Religious Initiative, the movement to forgive third-world debt, and many more), as we point to the inequalities and injustice often embedded in present conceptions of globalization.

Keith A. Russell, President and Professor of Pastoral Theology, American Baptist Seminary of the West

One of the signs of the Reign of God in the Synoptic Gospels in general, and in the Gospel of Luke in particular, is that the poor have good news preached to them. In the Messiah's presence the poor are cared for in a special way, the hungry are fed, the blind see, the lame walk, the dead are raised and the lepers are cleansed. The dawn of God's reign demands an urgent and compassionate advocacy for "the least of these."

Consider the Bible stories about the rich man and Lazarus, the rich young ruler, the last judgment and so on. Scripture does not mince words when it comes to loving, caring for, and doing justice to the weak, the weary, or the wounded. Jesus demands a compassionate advocacy, a preferential treatment for the poor.

With this biblical perspective on the poor in mind, let me respond to the questions about globalization. First, I doubt that globalization will have a positive effect on either secular or religious unity. A major thrust of globalization is consumption and not community. The drive to consume is at its heart an anti-communal movement. The movement succeeds on competition and not on unity, and it succeeds by dividing the rich from the poor.

Secondly, globalization does not threaten a sense of personal belonging to a religious community so much as it trivializes the nature of belonging. If we are not careful, religious membership will become just another form of consumption. Our belonging will be based on

"The drive to consume is at the heart an anti-communal movement."

—Keith Russell



CDSP President Donn Morgan and
ABSW President Keith Russell

(continued on page 5)



CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

(continued from cover)



Ted Peters



Gaymon Bennett



Margaret McLean

Charles Barry



Karen Lebacqz



G. Paul Bishop, Jr.

Michael Mendiola

she insists that stem cell research must benefit the weakest members of society, especially those who exist on the margins of health care. "Justice," she believes, "demands that we struggle passionately with the question of who is it that we do not see."

Justice concerns are also paramount for **Karen Lebacqz**. In terms of stem cell research, Lebacqz asks what does justice require? As examples, she suggests the need to ensure the fair distribution of and access to medical technologies developed through research, as well as just development of the technology. In managing stem cell research, she believes "we need both a passion for justice and a capacity for rational discourse and civil disagreement."

Laurie Zoloth (Ph.D. '93) is professor of medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University. Reflecting on the issue from the Jewish ethical-legal tradition (*halachah*), she considers stem cell research in terms of our ethical obligations to heal the sick and to respond as a community to the needs of others. Because this research promises therapy for life-threatening diseases, it can function as part of *tikkun olam*, the mandate to be an active partner in the world's repair and perfection. "In the world of suffering and injustice," Zoloth writes, "all research can be understood as an opportunity to address injustice."

Suzanne Holland (Ph.D. '97), who chairs the religion department at the University of Puget Sound, stresses the implications of the debate for women and the poor. Using a feminist ethical analysis, Holland asks whose suffering is relieved by stem cell technology, and at whose expense? She is concerned that traditionally marginalized people, such as the poor and people of color, may not have opportunities to benefit from regenerative medical therapies. Holland's work also prompts a more fundamental question of whether precious resources ought to be expended on this research while so many live without basic health care. The placement of both our public and private dollars, she maintains, must reflect a "commitment to the have-nots" and a "more equitable distribution of benefits and burdens."

Michael Mendiola is a Roman Catholic scholar who has incorporated aspects of Catholic social teaching into his work on the issue. Recognizing that people of goodwill disagree on stem cell research, he stresses the need for constructive public dialogue. Given the therapeutic potential of stem cell technology, Mendiola suggests using an "ethic of toleration" to support further research. He is associate professor of Christian ethics at PSR, and serves as the coordinator of the interdisciplinary Bay Area Faith and Health Consortium.

United Church of Christ minister **Alan Kelchner** (Ph.D. '03) comments that he approves of research, provided that scientists show restraint and refrain from reproductive cloning. From his perspective, stem cell research is "something we have to be careful about."

While the ethical challenges surrounding the issue remain complicated, the voices of theological scholars and thinkers offer us constructive insight.

—Jenny Veninga, GTU doctoral student

The views presented in this article reflect only a small portion of these scholars' significant work in this area. For more information, see *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate*, a 2001 collection of essays edited by Lebacqz, Zoloth, and Holland. Ted Peters addresses the issue in his 1997 book, *Playing God?: Genetic Determinism and Human Freedom*. Bennett and Peters have co-published several articles together, including a chapter in *God and the Embryo: Religious Voices on Stem Cells and Cloning* (2003). They received a Newhall Award to teach a spring course at the GTU on genetics, theology, and ethics that will include a discussion of stem cell research (see p. 6).✻



POINT OF VIEW (continued from page 3)

STEM CELL ETHICS DEBATE ORIGINATED AT THE GTU

The possibility of stem cell research was first announced at a 1996 meeting at the GTU, two full years before successful research results would become public. At this meeting, Geron Corporation scientists shared the concept with eighteen GTU faculty and students. Lebacqz and Peters expressed their support for the establishment of an ethics advisory board to monitor future stem cell research. Geron's connection to the GTU was through Linda Sonntag, a GTU trustee and a venture capitalist.

The Geron Ethics Advisory Board (GEAB) was established in 1998. Lebacqz was the chair, and Mendiola, Peters, and Zoloth served as the first members. The board consulted with their colleagues at the GTU-affiliated Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences.

In the fall of 1998, the GEAB adopted a set of minimal guidelines for future research, titled "A Statement on Human Embryonic Stem Cells." That November, the Geron Corporation and the researchers at the University of Wisconsin and Johns Hopkins University publicly announced their historic achievements in isolating the first human embryonic and germ stem cells. President Clinton requested that the National Bioethics Advisory Council thoroughly review the issues associated with stem cell research.

At present, the Geron Ethics Advisory Board includes Lebacqz, Peters, and Zoloth, as well as scholars from Stanford Medical School and Santa Clara University. GTU doctoral student Gaymon Bennett serves as research assistant. GTU faculty and alumni continue publishing and speaking widely on the issue.✧

consuming religion together at the same time in the same place. We will be quick to change our criteria for success from a preferential treatment of the poor to indices of wealth and prosperity. The rise of the "prosperity gospel" in the United States is a vivid example of how gospel values get compromised and trivialized to fit the values of globalization.

Thirdly, the church must provide a counterweight to the values of globalization. *Our role as churches is to be advocates for the poor.* Gospel success must always be measured by the condition of the poor and not the condition of the rich. In a world where the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, the role of the church is one of passionate advocacy on behalf of the poor, the weary, and the wounded. Pious "feel-good" religion is not a substitute for justice-working, people-loving faith. The church dare not give up our advocacy role in exchange for the few chump change trinkets that the global marketers promise. Please do not be confused or misled by false gospel leaders, whether they be preachers, economists, or politicians. *There will be no good news for the rich unless there is good news for the poor.*✧

THE ANNUAL GTU ALUM LUNCHEON AT AAR/SBL, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

AN ANNUAL TRADITION CONTINUES...

Connect with friends and colleagues

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Join us in honoring the 2004 Alum of the Year

Dr. George E. (Tink) Tinker (Ph.D. '83)

*Professor of American Indian Cultures
and Religious Traditions*

Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado

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GTU alumni reception at 11:00 am and lunch at 11:30 am

Hilton Palacio Del Rio

Open to all GTU alumni; advance reservations are required.

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Newhall Awards



Scholars for All Subjects

The 2004-2005 Newhall Awards reflect the wide spectrum of rich interdisciplinary projects undertaken at the GTU. Among the topics to be explored this year are Asian theology, ethics and genetics, globalization, and literature and religion.

The Newhall awards offer a wonderful opportunity for students to work closely with professors whose interests and approaches parallel their own, on projects that would not be possible otherwise. The fellowships are made possible by Jane Newhall, a Trustee Emerita and longtime friend of the GTU.



PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

Steven Bauman, Lewis Rambo (SFTS) and Kelly Bulkeley (GTU & John F. Kennedy University)

Co-teaching a course on method, theory, and research in the psychological study of religion, including presentations by Bay Area scholars. Students will consider the implications of current research in psychology for their own work in theology, religious scholarship, and pastoral care.



GENETICS, THEOLOGY, AND ETHICS

Gaymon Bennett and Ted Peters (PLTS)

Co-teaching an exploratory course on the impact of genomics, cloning, and stem cell research on human identity; the ethical boundaries of genomic research; and theological and pastoral responses to these issues.



QUEER THEORY AND RELIGION

Jason Crawford, Jerome Baggett (JSTB) and Jay Johnson (PSR's Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies)

Developing and co-teaching a course on "Queer Theory and Religion." This course will examine the function of queer theory as a tool for critical social analysis and its relevance for discussions on ethics, sexuality, and political engagement, particularly from the perspective of diverse faith communities.



NARRATIVES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

Kerry Danner-McDonald, Beatrice Morris and Rosemary Radford Ruether (GTU/PSR)

Developing and co-teaching a course on the intersections of ethics, womanist theology, post-colonialism, and ecofeminism within the narratives of African-American women. Students will examine four novels by Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, considering such themes as memory, narrative, identity, ecology, and sexuality.

SECOND SEMESTER GREEK

Neil Fernyhough and William Countryman (CDSP)

Teaching assistant for a course that will build upon skills in Greek vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and style introduced in first semester Greek. Using the Gospel of John, students will also gain a practical introduction to New Testament exegesis and critical methods.

CONTEMPORARY PILGRIMAGES

Lee Gilmore and Clare Fischer (SKSM)

Drawing from Gilmore's dissertation project on the Burning Man festival in Nevada, and Dr. Fischer's research on pilgrimage in Indonesia, this collaborative research project will probe such issues as tourism and globalization; tourism as a system of exchange values; constructions of sacred space; and the use of interdisciplinary theories and methods in the study of those issues.



VICES AND VIRTUES IN ETHICAL SYSTEMS

Rebecca Gordon and Martha Ellen Stortz (PLTS)

Developing a curriculum for a future course on "Approaching Virtue Through Vice." Because so many people seem to find vice more fascinating than virtue, this study will begin with a concrete examination of vice. Questions will be posed from various sources, including western Christianity, Jewish ethical thought, non-western traditions, postmodernity, natural law, liberation theology/feminism, and neurobiology.



POST-BIBLICAL HEBREW TEXTS

Ruth Haber and Joshua Holo (CJS)

This course provides an introduction to the vocabulary, style, and grammatical features of medieval Hebrew commentary. Students will read the work of two influential Jewish Bible commentators, Rashi and Ramban.



EVOLUTION AND THEOLOGY

Nathan Hallanger and Ted Peters (PLTS)

Offered during GTU's 2004 Summer Session, their course on "The Evolution-Creation Controversy" focused on the relationships between evolutionary theory, the eugenics movement, and theology. Building upon the course, Peters and Hallanger will continue research on the religious and theological responses to the early eugenics movement.

GLOBALIZATION, ECUMENISM, AND ETHICS

Eileen Harrington, Clare Fischer (SKSM), Lewis Mudge (SFTS) and Rosemary Radford Ruether (GTU/PSR)

Co-teaching a two-semester seminar on economic globalization and responses from secular and religious groups throughout the world. Students will examine the history of globalization and its effects on global and local concerns, including issues of health; labor; women and children; the environment; natural resources; and alternatives to globalization.



STAGING JUDAISM

Donny Inbar and Naomi Seidman (CJS)

Developing and co-teaching a course on the various aspects of Jewish religious texts, thought, and practice as they are interpreted in the theater. Students will consider the medieval European enactment of Hebrew Bible stories in Christian and Jewish contexts, and will explore the ways in which theater represents religion and serves as ritual space. Born and raised in Israel, Inbar has worked in Israeli media and theater as director, translator, and playwright.



CONTEMPORARY ASIAN THEOLOGY

Abraham Kadaliyil and Kenan Osborne (FST)

Research and teaching assistant for a spring course on contemporary Asian Roman Catholic and Protestant theology. Christian theological positions will be considered within the framework of Asian thought, including Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, tribal religion, Buddhism, and Shamanism.



ELEMENTARY BIBLICAL HEBREW

Robert Kramish and LeAnn Snow Flesher (ABSW)

Co-teaching a fall course that will provide the beginning Hebrew student with a foundation in phonology, morphology, and simple syntax, as well basic grammar and vocabulary.



CHRISTIANITY IN THE NORTH AMERICAN WEST

Hyoung Sin Park and Randi Walker (PSR)

This two semester research project on "Cultural Diversity of Christianity in the North Pacific Basin Area" will compare East Asian Christianity in the modern period, with Christianity in the North American West. Park and Walker will examine the contributions and limitations of North American missionaries, the meaning of immigration, and the historical meanings of North Pacific Christianity.



SOCIAL-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY

Julia Prinz and Luise Schottroff (PSR)

Developing and co-teaching a course that will consider new methodology in biblical interpretation and Christian spirituality. Focusing on parables and poetic images in the Gospels, students will analyze the social and political dimensions of scripture and draw connections to their own social locations and ministerial contexts.

(continued on page 8)



FALL LECTURES

2004 SURJIT SINGH LECTURE ON COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND CULTURE

November 3

UC Berkeley Professor Joanna Williams will lecture on "Ecumenical Religious Art: The Reign of Akbar in Mughal India." 7 pm lecture, Pacific School of Religion Chapel, 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley; 5:30 pm reception at the Badè Museum. 510/649-2440.

2004 GTU DISTINGUISHED FACULTY LECTURE

November 10

Barbara Green, Professor of Biblical Studies at Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, will lecture on "Fruitful Flailings: Reading the Anger of the Prophet Jonah." 7 pm, Pacific School of Religion Chapel, 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley. 510/649-2440.

NEW CALENDAR

The GTU's new biannual calendar came out this fall, featuring major fall and winter events. Log on to "Contact Us" at www.gtu.edu to get on the mailing list if you didn't receive one.

Or visit the "News and Events" pages for complete information on all GTU consortium lectures, art exhibits, and other events. The next calendar will be mailed in January.



NEWHALL AWARDS (continued from page 7)



LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTOLOGY

Jennifer Schepers-Hughes and Rosemary Radford Ruether (GTU/PSR)

Developing and co-teaching an interdisciplinary course on the meaning of Christ's suffering on the cross, and on theological and institutional ambivalence toward popular religious devotion to graphic representations of the crucifixion. Schepers-Hughes recently spent time researching popular and archival resources in Mexico for her project.

CLASSIC JEWISH SOURCES

Devorah Schoenfeld and Naomi Seidman (CJS)

A spring semester Hebrew language and text-reading course, "Reading the Jewish Library: A Survey of the Classic Jewish Sources" will cover a range of Hebrew texts from biblical to modern. Before coming to the GTU, Schoenfeld taught courses on Talmud, Jewish Law, and the Bible at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem.



MEDIEVAL BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Devorah Schoenfeld and Christopher Ocker (SFTS)

In this fall course on "Jewish and Christian Bible Interpretation in the Middle Ages," texts will be placed in historical context by looking at medieval cultures of reading and the history of Jewish/Christian relations.



READING RELIGION

Lisa Webster and Naomi Seidman (CJS)

Co-developing and co-teaching a course on religion and literature, examining its history from T.S. Eliot's 1935 essay to the present. Students will survey sacred and secular literary genres, and consider ways literary theory can inform the study of religious writing.

CONFUCIAN AND TAOIST SPIRITUALITY

Chuan Xu and Judith Berling (GTU)

Co-teaching a spring course that will introduce the goals and methods of spiritual cultivation in Confucianism and Daoism, and how they can enrich our spiritual practice and understanding of multi-cultural ministry and living. The course will include introductions to Chinese culture, Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. ❀



Religion and Politics

AN INTERVIEW WITH JEROME BAGGETT

Jerome Baggett (GTU Ph.D. '98) is associate professor of religion and society at Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, and a GTU core doctoral faculty member. He is the author of *Habitat for Humanity: Building Private Homes, Building Public Religion*, and is currently researching six Bay Area Catholic parishes for his next book, about how diverse populations appropriate Catholicism as a cultural tradition. Baggett has given a variety of lectures throughout the Bay Area on topics such as religion and politics, contemporary American Catholicism, and social justice issues.

GTU Currents: What are the perils and the promises of a greater role for religion within our civic landscape?

We have lots of data on how religion already does play a big role, in helping to create the bonds of trust and reciprocity that tie civil society together. But I think the biggest contribution may be that, at its best, religion can summon forth our higher selves. It can make us better than we really are, giving us the capacity to transcend ourselves and our self-interests. Religion accosts us with the mysteries of the world, with our radical unknowing, and with our constitutive need for the other.

Another way to put it is that religion is a cultural carrier of symbols, images, and narratives that make other-regarding behavior make sense to us. And even make it obligatory, over time. It seems to me that this interest in the other is the lifeblood of a democracy.

So, one potential peril now is a widespread theological illiteracy in the U.S. We forget what religion is, and start to think it's a blueprint or textbook. We forget that it typically questions more answers than it answers questions. And then we open ourselves to being manipulated by people who deploy religious language in a strategic fashion, in ways that are actually counterproductive for our best interests as a society.

Today's "culture wars" are described as a growing divide between the more liberal and more conservative areas of the country. How do you see these differing social and religious values playing out in the elections?

Despite all the rhetoric, there really is no data for the "culture wars," in the sense of two camps, conservatives and progressives, who are at each other's throats. Most Americans simply aren't black or white on pressing moral issues; indeed, they're quite "grey." For instance, people generally don't think you're going to go to hell if you have an abortion or, alternatively, that it should be a leisure activity. Broadly speaking, Americans—and this is what we want—are extremely serious and discerning about this issue and similar ones. It's the religious and political elites who are most vociferously either/or, and of course the mass media is addicted to simplicity and largely rejects nuance. Most individuals are conservative on some issues, and quite liberal on others.

So, if you just scratch the surface and get beyond the rhetoric, we don't have a real culture war in the United States.

Now, that might not matter. If our politicians persist in using culture war rhetoric, that might get enough people to believe that there is a culture war, and thus act along those lines. "Situations defined as real are real in their consequences," as the sociologist W. I. Thomas famously noted. If we're not savvy enough to see through the regnant definition of our situation, we might actually create what the rhetoric is pointing us towards.

As the two political parties go back and forth on election issues, I'm struck that we haven't gotten past the first commandment about idolatry. Although Democrats and Republicans go to great pains to accentuate their differences, they are equally dogmatic about economic security as a societal cure-all, and in their unquestioned fidelity to the nation-state, with its unquestioned use of violence as a solver of problems. I think it's remarkable that beneath the seeming opposition, there's an enormous consensus on these idols.

For all the problems that can come from mixing religion and politics, it's so often a religious way of seeing the world that puts the lie to that dogmatism. It's very ironic. The democratic nation-state was born of resistance to religious authoritarianism and violence, and now, I think, we need religious institutions, leaders and publics, to resist the dogmatism of politics as usual.

Given the vigor of Christian conservatives in the country today, how do you understand the failure of a coherent "religious left" to form?

There have been and continue to be powerful contributions from the religious left in everything from electoral politics to the civil rights, peace and environmental movements, to cite a few examples. The question of coherence in the religious left is the rub, and I think it's because eclecticism is part of its own ideology. The religious left is more incoherent because it hasn't yet generated the powerful symbols and root metaphors that conceptualize the left as a community of communities, who are interdependent. Right now, the single most important task of the religious left is to come to a new imaging of itself—as disparate but unified.

This is one reason why institutions like the GTU are so important. The GTU is a relatively brash experiment in envisioning this kind of "unity in difference," accentuating the benefits of both. Sometimes it's frustrating, and it's often quite slow; but it's worth the effort. There aren't that many institutions that are tooled to do this task: to see the interdependence and interpenetration of religious traditions, and our reliance on one another. ❖



From the Bookshelf



GTU FACULTY PICK THEIR FAVORITE BOOKS OF THE PAST YEAR

DOUG ADAMS

Professor of Christianity and Arts, Pacific School of Religion

Selected 2004-05 courses: *Art and Religion: Modern America; Arts Ministry and Practicality*

Favorite book read recently: *Reluctant Partners: Art and Religion in Dialogue*, edited by Ena Giurescu Heller. In light of the extensive publications, exhibitions, and conferences documented in this volume focused on new directions in "visual art and religion" scholarship, I would have titled it "Reluctant and Expectant Partners." The editor Ena Giurescu Heller is director of the Gallery of the American Bible Society, where many Luce Foundation-funded events are advancing this field. Nine authors assess the state of "art and religion," with particular attention to Judaism and Christianity, new methodologies, and the contributions of scholars at universities, seminaries, and art museums. Two dozen books by GTU faculty are included in the comprehensive bibliography.

JUDITH BERLING

Professor of Chinese and Comparative Religions, Graduate Theological Union

Selected 2004-05 courses: *Teaching/Learning Other Religions; Confucian/Daoist Spirituality* (Newhall award course, taught with Chan Xu)

Favorite book read recently: The book which most stimulated me in the past year was one I read in publishers' galley: James L. Fredericks' *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity*, due out by Orbis Books this fall. James Fredericks moves us beyond exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism, and fulfillment theologies to comparative theology. Not only does he provide us with a fine model of comparative theology—comparing Nagarjuna's emptiness with Aquinas' incomprehensibility of God—but he also makes a sound case for the benefits of com-

parative theology for Christian self-understanding, as well as their hospitality toward and solidarity with persons of other faiths. This book marks a significant step forward.



Mark Graves, a second year M.A. student in Systematic and Philosophical Theology at JSTB, enjoys the GTU Bookstore's new seating and coffee area. Other recent renovations at the store include an expanded gift section with GTU wear, icons, cards, stoles, and many other items. You can also visit their online store at www.gtu.edu to browse a wide selection of theological and religious titles.

MARY ANN DONOVAN, SC

Professor of Historical Theology and Spirituality, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

Selected 2004-05 courses: *Film, Preaching, and Pastoral Care; Introduction to Ecumenism*

Favorite book read recently: *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* by Azar Nafish is easily the most interesting book I've read in the last year. The book is structured around Nafish's experience conducting a clandestine women's reading group under the Ayatollah; its sections are colored by the readings. The author grew up in Iran under the Shah. Veiling was then optional. (Her grandmother, who remained veiled for religious reasons,

impressed her.) She herself was educated in the States, then returned to her homeland to teach English literature in a university. With the coming of the Ayatollah she was gradually marginalized, then dismissed from her post. The book offers a thoughtful picture of women's circumstances under a fundamentalist oligarchy. A final note: before she ultimately left Iran, Nafish resisted veiling for religious reasons.

JOSHUA HOLO

Assistant Professor of Jewish History, GTU's Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies

Selected 2004-05 courses: *Jewish Cultures; Encounters: Christian/Muslim/Jews*

Favorite book read recently: *Under the Banner of Heaven*, by Jon Krakauer. Aside from being a fascinating look into the workings of so-called Mormon fundamentalism, the author achieves a delicate balance of sympathy and criticism for his subject. The topic and its treatment raised all kinds of questions and challenges regarding the nature of dialogue, its limits and its assumptions. From my position as a Jewish Studies scholar, outside-looking-in at issues that occupy Christian thinkers but at the same time amidst them here at the GTU, I see in Mormonism an opportunity for serious and engaging conversation, precisely because of the challenges it poses for all sides.

TOM ROGERS

Associate Professor of Homiletics, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Selected 2004-05 courses: *Preaching Across Cultures; Public Ministry Needs/Assessment*

Favorite book read recently: *The Starlore Handbook: An Essential Guide to the Night Sky*, by Geoffrey Cornelius. I have always enjoyed looking up at the stars, but other than the Big

News & Notes



Dipper, they have been just a big blur of little lights. Reading Geoffrey Cornelius' illustrated guide to the sky drastically changed that for me. I still look up, and I still enjoy it, but there is no longer just a blur. I have come to discover there is so much on which to focus. The book combines astronomy, myth, and symbolism. A reader does not need a background in astronomy, and the author concentrates on features of the sky that can be made out by the naked eye or binoculars of average power. Each of the 88 constellations is given separate treatment with great constellation maps and star tables. It is pretty cool now to be able to identify which star is Deneb in the constellation Cygnus, and to know that the light I am seeing was just setting on its journey about the time Constantine was suggesting it was okay to be Christian.

PHILIP WICKERI

Flora Lamson Hewlett Professor of Evangelism and Mission, San Francisco Theological Seminary

Selected 2004-05 course: *Mission, Church and Culture*

Favorite book read recently: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Terror*. This is their sequel to *Empire*, which presents the most compelling and provocative analysis of globalization I have read. *Multitude* extends this vision in light of America's unilateral war on terror, and offers hopeful new possibilities for globally networked communities committed to resistance and democratic change. I find their in-depth analysis highly original, doggedly realistic and at the same time hopeful. Religious thinkers will discover in this book resources for social, cultural and political change. ❀

What's new - from Alumni, Faculty, and Students

For more updates and to send in your news, visit www.gtu.edu

GORDON CLANTON (Ph.D. '73) received the 2004 Outstanding Faculty Award in the Department of Sociology at San Diego State University, where he has taught since 1975.

JOSEPH DE LEON, a third year doctoral student in art and religion, will present a paper on the theological aesthetic issues implicit in the Passion narrative at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion.

MARILYN GUSTIN (Ph.D. '87) recently published *A Gate Ajar*. In it she reflects on the meanings of some of the teachings attributed to Jesus, asking "What if this teaching is about the spiritual or interior life and not so much about ethics and morality?"

THOMAS HART (Ph.D. '74) has published a new book, *What Does It Mean To Be a Man?* (Paulist Press). His previous books include *Spiritual Quest: A Guide to the Changing Landscape*; *The Art of Christian Listening*; and *Hidden Spring: The Spiritual Dimension of Therapy*.

SISTER MARTHA ANN KIRK (Th.D. '86) recently published *Women of Bible Lands: A Pilgrimage to Wisdom and Compassion* (Liturgical Press).

MARY BETH LAMB (Ph.D. '98) has accepted a lecturer position at Southwest Missouri State University, teaching religion in America.

KENNETH J. LAVERONE, OFM (M.A. '94) has completed a JCL in Canon Law at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas in Rome. He is professor of canon law at Franciscan School of Theology, beginning September 2004.

CRISTINA OLSEN (Ph.D. '01) has accepted a position as grants administrator for World Neighbors, following a position as grant writer for Hospice of Marin.

WILLIAM H. PETERSEN (Ph.D. '76) is provost and professor of ecclesiastical and ecumenical history at Bexley Hall (Episcopal) Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. He is serving a two-year term as president of the North American Academy of Ecumenists.

GREGORY ROCCA, former president of Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, has published a new book entitled *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology*.

JEANETTE RODRIGUEZ (Ph.D. '90) became full professor in the department of theology and religious studies at Seattle University last spring, where she also serves as the director of the Center for the Study of Justice in Society. Since publishing her book, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, she has authored many articles, including "Mestiza Spirituality: Community, Ritual, and Justice" in the June 2004 issue of *Theological Studies*.

VICTORIA RUE (Ph.D. '94) was ordained a deacon in the Roman Catholic Church in June through the Austria-based Training Program for Women Priests. This program supports the ordination movement for women and prepares them for an eventual ordination to the priesthood. As part of her diaconate, she has started a Roman Catholic women's spirituality group in the Monterey/Santa Cruz area, and will begin working as a hospice chaplain in Santa Cruz in September.

MARTA VIDES DE GONZÁLEZ (Ph.D. '03) has been appointed assistant professor of law and society in the department of social science and human services at Ramapo College of New Jersey, beginning September 2004.

KIRK WEGTER-MCNELLY (Ph.D. '03) is assistant professor of theology at Boston University, beginning September 2004. ❀

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- James A. Donahue, President

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Dana Davis

HEWLETT LIBRARY TO ACQUIRE NEW COLLECTION

The GTU is pleased to announce that the Flora Lamson Hewlett Library has been awarded a \$150,000 grant to establish the William Randolph Hearst Collection of Literature and Multimedia.

Made possible by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, the award will enable the library to purchase acquisitions in three critical areas of scholarship: youth ministry, ministry to the aging, and culture. These areas were chosen in response to the diverse ministerial and scholarly needs of the GTU community, and reflect growing scholarship in those fields.

Established in 1969, the Hewlett Library maintains one of the most comprehensive theological collections in the country. Today the 430,000-volume library serves GTU students, faculty, and the general public, providing access to its comprehensive collection, community events, and art exhibitions. The Hearst Collection will assist the library in continuing its tradition as a premier resource for ecumenical and interfaith scholarship.

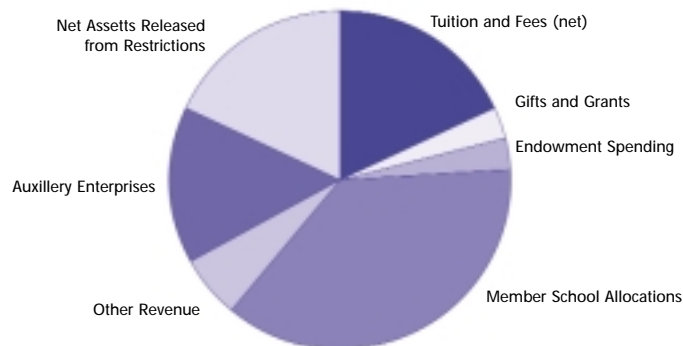
For over thirty years, the William Randolph Hearst Foundation has supported a variety of key projects at the GTU. Founded in 1945 by philanthropist William Randolph Hearst, the Hearst Foundation assists institutions by providing opportunities in education, health, social service, and culture. The new collection will honor Hearst's fine legacy of journalism and publishing. ❀

—Jenny Veninga, GTU doctoral student

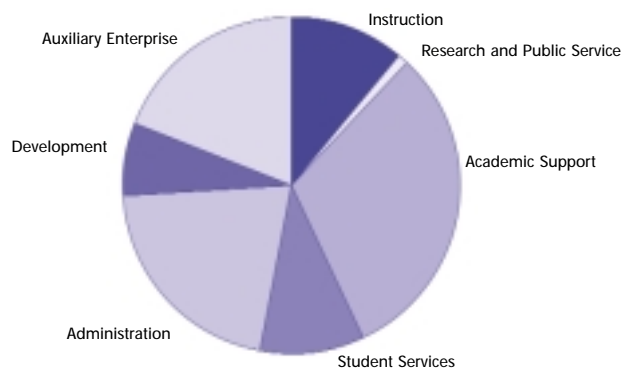


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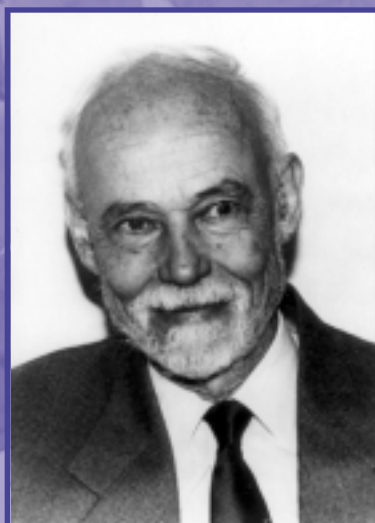


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“Religion alive confronts the individual with the most momentous option life can present. It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a projected journey across the jungles, peaks, and deserts of the human spirit. The call is to confront reality, to master the self.”

—Huston Smith, *The Illustrated World Religions*

The GTU's October 6 *Blessing of the Crush* fundraiser for student scholarships honored Huston Smith, the renowned scholar of world religions. The GTU salutes Dr. Smith's rich contributions to the fields of theology and religious studies, and his commitment to the value of religious pluralism.