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# Tributes to Peter Homans

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# CRITERION

A Publication of the University of Chicago Divinity School



## Dear Alumni and Friends —

Opening this Autumn 2009 issue of *Criterion* is “The Mythology of Evil,” by Robert Ellwood, who was named Alumnus of the Year for 2009 by the Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union. His public address was delivered on April 30, 2009, in Swift Lecture Hall.

Next is a lecture by Franklin I. Gamwell, “Lincoln and the Religious Question,” which was delivered in Swift Hall on May 12, 2009, to the Visiting Committee. This is followed by a reprint of the Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln, which Gamwell’s talk addresses.

This issue also pays tribute to Peter Homans (1930–2009). Homans joined the faculty of the Divinity School in 1965 as Assistant Professor of Religion and Personality. He had completed his doctorate in that program and was invited to join the faculty. Throughout the ensuing four decades he taught at the Divinity School, and in the Committees on the History of Culture and Human Development and in the College. We have included the welcoming remarks made at his memorial service by Dean Richard A. Rosengarten as well as remarks by his former student, Diane Jonte-Pace, and daughter Jennifer Homans.

Closing this issue we offer a small ‘books in brief’ section. We asked some of our faculty to provide us with the titles of recent books they have found particularly interesting and enjoyable and we present here some reading possibilities for the winter as recommended by these faculty members.

As always, my thanks to Susan Zakin, editorial assistant, and Robin Winge, designer.

I hope you enjoy this issue,

**Terren Ilana Wein**, *Editor*

# CRITERION

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Robert Ellwood was Professor of World Religions at the University of Southern California for thirty years, from 1967 until his retirement in 1997. He was the Divinity School's Alumnus of the Year for 2009.

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ROBERT ELLWOOD

# The Mythology of Evil

The Divinity School Alumnus of the Year Address

**F**irst of all let me say how honored I feel to be here today. I believe this event is not only a personal honor, but also honors the entire University of Chicago Divinity School experience, which for so many of us has been among those landmark passages in life that profoundly affect everything thereafter. In the novel *The Jane Austen Book Club*, a character says, “You never really leave high school.” That’s no doubt true, but I’m here to testify that for me a far more positive truism is that you never really leave the University of Chicago Divinity School.

In my case it is not only a matter of how I think about numerous intellectual issues, and not only a matter of the academic career that followed. I am very pleased that my spouse, Gracia Fay, is with us today, because it was at the Divinity School that I met her some forty-five years ago; she received an M.A. in Religion and Art (as it was then called) from the School in 1964—though she got the message that if she tried to go on she would have to be twice as good as a man, a situation I am sure is now totally different. She later received a Ph.D. in philosophy of religion from Claremont Graduate University, and I am very proud of her. I am no less proud of our daughter, Fay Ellen, also with us today, and presently an ABD graduate student in American literature and religion at Claremont.

I was asked to start off this afternoon with a few remi-

niscences of the Divinity School as I knew it, and it’s not hard to get an old alum of my age started on such stories. I was here in the now-legendary Sixties. I suppose I should begin at the beginning, *ab origino*, in *illud tempus*, as my teacher Mircea Eliade would have put it. We are now talking about the very early Sixties, before I went to Chicago, even before the Kennedy assassination—which I first heard about upon returning home to Snell Hall after a graduate seminar.

Even before Chicago, I was a Navy chaplain serving a battalion of Marines in Okinawa and Japan. I don’t know if I did the Marines any good, but those two years were tremendously mind-expanding for me. Having little to go on heretofore but the religion of small-town Midwest America and a rather conventional Episcopal theological



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and no less by the shamanesses . . .

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education, I was suddenly thrown in with colleagues and clients of amazing variety; I had never before, as I did in the Navy chaplaincy, known as good friends a Southern Baptist minister, a Roman Catholic priest, an Eastern Orthodox priest, together with other fellow Americans in all their remarkable diversity, young men out of the inner city ghetto or the coal mines of West Virginia as well as Midwestern farms. Not only that, but for the first time in my life I was situated in a largely non-Christian culture. I was fascinated by the Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, and no less by the shamanesses of Okinawan traditional religion, which has been termed the only traditional religion of unambiguous female leadership, and I was puzzled as to how one was to understand all these religious variants from the perspective of my standard-brand Christianity.

Then, by chance, I came across a review of a book by Mircea Eliade, which apparently looked at religions not just in terms of creed—we believe this, they believe that—but of structures such as sacred space and time, which they more or less all have, though in varying configurations. Suddenly a whole new image of shrine, temple, and church snapped into view. Perhaps I should have gotten beyond belief before, but the Eliade review was in fact the catalyst of a whole new way of thinking. I ordered the book, read it, and then decided that as soon as my Navy time was up, having nothing better to do, I wanted to try to go to where he was, the University of Chicago Divinity School, as a graduate student in history of religions.

The Navy was good enough to send me to Great Lakes Naval Training Station after my East Asian tour was over to help acclimatize me, I suppose, to the Chicago environment, and I made my way down to the University a few times. I met my principal mentor, Joseph Kitagawa, since I had thought to specialize in Japanese religion, and a wonderful friend and counselor he was. He was a true *sensei* in the best Japanese style, seeing his students as virtually family, helpful with personal as well as academic problems, using all his remarkably wide contacts in the academic world with the skill of a consummate diplomat to get them good jobs upon completion.

I recall the first Divinity School class I visited that fall of 1962 before actually starting my program, to Charles

Long's Introduction to History of Religions, and as it happened that day there was a guest speaker, Tom Altizer talking about the Death of God. I immediately knew this Divinity School was different from any I had known before. I recall that my good friend Tom Owens, assistant in the Swift Hall library of those days, liked to point out to awestruck visitors the exact place where Altizer was sitting in the library when he had his theophany, if that is the right word, of the Death of God.

In the winter term of 1963 I moved down to Hyde Park and began classes. I recall Chuck Long, surely one of the great classroom teachers of all time, and of course Mircea Eliade. The three History of Religions professors of those days, Eliade, Kitagawa, and Long, represented three continents and three races, not to mention three very different personal paths to their positions at Chicago. It was an unforgettable mix. Long was a great lecturer. Kitagawa and Eliade, neither native English speakers, were soft-spoken and scholarly. Even so, the contrast was marked. Eliade, in the grand tradition of the European savant, was a polyglot and an adventurer with ideas; Kitagawa, while certainly a major scholar of Japanese religion and following upon the legacy of Joachim Wach, also had a keen sense of the practical, and was a man of the world in the best sense of the term. (Eliade, having perhaps been overly political earlier in his native Romania, now allegedly never read newspapers or followed current events—it was rumored he once said the last really important event in history was the discovery of agriculture—and according to student legend once asked Kitagawa to let him know if anything really significant happened, like the start of war at the time of the Cuba missile crisis.)

I recall that once at a meeting of the History of Religions club, the faculty were asked to comment on scholarly resources. Eliade, as one might expect, gave a list of important journals in several languages; Kitagawa instead said the best thing to do when starting a paper was to read a good encyclopedia article on that topic, to get a sense of the key points and bibliography: good advice I have often followed and given, and I would add the best encyclopedia is now the great *Encyclopedia of Religion*, the first edition of which was edited by Mircea Eliade.

... behind every story a possible backstory always lurks.

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As a teacher, Eliade was at his best in a small graduate seminar, in which his immense learning and quiet but perceptive comments supremely came into play. In a larger class, his communication skills were occasionally shaky. I recall once he kept talking about the religion of the “Sucks.” We had a hard time figuring out what he meant, but eventually realized it was the Sioux, Eliade obviously assuming that no American would pronounce French correctly.

This gives me a chance, though, to credit him and the History of Religions program with something else: I had spent my junior and senior high school years living in a small town only a short drive from the great Sioux reservations of South Dakota, and had occasionally visited them, but at the time had no interest in Native American religion, my youthful imagination being far more absorbed with science fiction or romantic fantasies of medieval Europe. It took the HR program at Chicago to awaken me to the wonderfully rich heritage of Native American myth and religion, which I have lately been studying more and more.

In that connection I would like particularly to welcome this afternoon my brother-in-law, Gerrit Haagsma, a retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church. Some years ago, Gerrit served a largely Navajo church and school in Fort Wingate, New Mexico. I recall our visiting him and his lovely wife Rebecca there, and in good conversations as well as visits to sacred sites and ceremonies sharing in his profound knowledge of Navajo culture and spirituality as well as of Christianity. Thank you, Gerrit.

These observations may allow me an entry into the topic I would like to deal with this afternoon, the mythology of evil, on which I am presently writing a small book, *Tales of Darkness: the Mythology of Evil*<sup>1</sup> which will include several Native American examples. I had thought briefly that it might be appropriate for me to discourse on Mircea Eliade and his legacy on this occasion, but prudence led me otherwise. In recent years Eliade’s has become a very controversial and divisive name, not seldom arousing visceral emotions, and I would prefer today be a happy and celebratory occasion. If anyone wants to know my take on Eliade, I refer him or her to my book, *The Politics of Myth*. For now, I’d like to talk about evil, which I’m sure most of us would at least agree is a Bad Thing.

In a discussion of the mythology of evil, which comes first: a definition of myth, or of evil? Both go together, and one cannot be understood without the other. In mythological treatment, evil becomes part of a narrative. It is not a philosophical abstraction. It is a story, and must possess the basic characteristics of story. This is, and always has been, the great strength of myth, for our *lives* are stories, not abstractions; they can be slipped into the casings of myth, as it were, to put them in larger, even cosmic, perspective.

As any writer knows, a story needs a plot, and the plot requires some problem or hindrance to be overcome. The barrier can be defined mythically as evil. But any good writer, and any good mythmaker, must also take to heart the writing school dictum: Show, don’t tell. The obstacle must be presented in the guise of an enemy or force that can be seen or felt; that is what makes a piece of literature a *myth* of evil, in contrast to a metaphysical or theological abstraction endeavoring to explain it. Then, the terror seen and felt can best be made palpable by putting it at the heart of a story: evil is the iron gate to be overleaped, the cunning foe to be outsmarted, the dark knight to be bested in fair combat.

A myth or story of evil will not answer all questions that could arise, for behind every story a possible backstory always lurks. We can say that God was Creator of heaven and earth, but one can then ask, as children often do, where did God come from? Where was evil before it oozed its way into our once happy fields? What happened before to make ours the kind of world in which a given story could take place? Even as the strength of myth is that it relates to the way our lives are stories, not metaphysical abstractions, so its weakness is that it cannot tell what happened before the story began, to make it begin.

But first and final questions are not insurmountable problems in relation to evil, for evil in the end is always the inexplicable, the “mystery of iniquity” (II Thess. 2:7). It is that which ought not to be, yet is—“The abomination of desolation... standing where it ought not” (Mark 13:14).

So much in the glorious universe around us suggests a smooth, harmonious system. The stars in their courses, the circling planets, the turn of the seasons, even the natural order built into biology—birth, childhood, maturity, aging,



... call it stain, spiritual pollution, an accursed land.

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death—point toward a profound yet rational plan, almost mathematical in its precision, like a beautiful ship sailing on its maiden voyage across a serene sea.

The something else breaks in, shattering the mosaic of balanced colors, drowning out the glorious symphony by discordant notes, like the clash of ice and metal that sank the *Titanic*. For all we know, whole world-systems teeming with life-forms may be swallowed up suddenly and mercilessly every day by supernova or black holes. Here on planet earth, thousands perish or suffer excruciating agony regularly, from fire, flood, and famine. Few creatures born into this world, in fact, complete the full life-cycle programmed into their genetic inheritance. These include not only those fish of whose innumerable spawn only a few survive to adulthood, or those countless beasts whose lives we cut short for our own purposes, but also those human beings who die young of war or disease, or who fall far short of all they could be out of poverty and exploitation. What does myth have to say about this situation?

I would like to propose eight types of myth dealing with the problem of evil. I am well aware that schematics like this can become entirely too artificial. No doubt the lines could be drawn in a number of different ways, and there is overlap between the categories. Nonetheless this is one way to present some of the material I have gathered. The groupings are: 1) myths centering on defilement or impurity; 2) myths of evil people, such as witches; 3) myths of bringers of evil from outside earth or outside the human sphere, such as Satan or Iblis; 4) myths making evil part of “the way things are,” insisting it is built into the structures of creation; 5) myths, often humorous in tone, explaining evil or death as the result of a seemingly trivial mistake; 6) myths of initiation, which interpret evil either as the necessary pain of initiation, or as initiation gone wrong; 7) trickster myths, which associate evil with that intriguing mythic figure; and 8) hero myths, wherein evil seems to be necessary so that the hero may undergo the ordeal in which it is confronted and defeated. I will not have time today to offer examples of all these categories, but will present a representative sampling.

To begin with defilement and impurity first, this category will forever be associated with a well-known Chicago figure,

Paul Ricoeur, whose monumental study *The Symbolism of Evil* centered on it. As Ricoeur wrote, “Defilement itself is scarcely a representation, and what representation there is, is immersed in a specific sort of fear that blocks reflection. With defilement we enter into the reign of Terror.”<sup>2</sup> Thus Ricoeur views this ill-defined but overwhelming sense of stain, of contamination, of sin and dread of retribution, to be so potent that precise analysis is barred. The horror swallows up further rational thought, even as it makes us spiritually human: “That is why the primitive dread deserves to be interrogated as our oldest memory,”<sup>3</sup> said Ricoeur. In examples of this category, defilement and the vague but powerful feelings to which it gives rise, seem the central reality, the cause almost an afterthought.

In these myths of evil, setting is then the real antagonist. Earth and sky themselves bespeak a pervasive presence of evil: call it stain, spiritual pollution, an accursed land. In tales of terror, from elder myths and fairy tales like many of those of the Brothers Grimm to horror movies, the real enemy is nothing so much as fear itself, that primal dread which paralyzes thought.

Take for example these lines from the prophet Amos, in the Hebrew scriptures, in which the devastation of the land seems far more vivid than the Lord who sent it:

I blasted you with black blight and red;  
I laid waste your gardens and vineyards;  
the locust devoured your fig-trees and your olives;  
yet you did not come back to me.  
This is the very word of the Lord.

I sent plague upon you like the plagues of Egypt;  
I killed with the sword  
your young men and your troops of horses.  
I made your camps stink in your nostrils;  
yet you did not come back to me.  
This is the very word of the Lord.

[Amos 4: 9–10; *The New English Bible*]

There is a reason for this pollution, but the sense of pollution itself seems prior, and at least in the opinion of Paul Ricoeur was the primordial experience which myth tried to

## Even birds and animals may be witches in disguise.

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interpret, in order to make ours a rational and just world.

Second, more developed are myths of evil people. In African and Slavic cultures especially, many if not most unexpected everyday calamities, such as sickness, bad harvests, family discord, or queer happenings at milking time, may well be attributed to an enemy, perhaps outwardly a friend or neighbor, who is secretly a witch. In 1547, a disastrous fire burned much of Moscow; popular opinion blamed it on witchcraft aimed against Czar Ivan the Terrible. It was said that Princess Anna Glinskaia had soaked human hearts in water. The evil aristocrat then sprinkled that water over buildings and set fire to them. A male relative of hers was killed by an angry mob in retaliation.

Even birds and animals may be witches in disguise. Moreover, Russian witches were said to be able to control weather, and even to steal the light of the moon. They had an inordinate appetite for milk, and could drain a cow dry at a distance simply by sticking a knife into a tree. It was said that one peasant, facing ruin because the milk of his herd was being taken, stood watch one night in his barn. Toward midnight, he saw a cat steal in, then before his astonished eyes turn into a woman, who began milking a cow. The peasant took an ax, and with one blow severed the thief's arm at her wrist. He went home satisfied with his night's work. But back in his house he found his mother moaning in pain, blood flowing from the stump of her arm.<sup>4</sup>

One thing I wish to do in this study is present recent parallels to traditional mythology, in the spirit of Eliade's camouflages of the sacred. Consider the "Satanic panic" of the 1980s and early 90s that swept through the United States, Britain, and other English-speaking countries. Numerous articles appeared in the popular media presenting accounts of "ritual abuse" replete with Satanic symbols. Often these outrages were alleged to take place at preschools and daycare centers, based on the accounts of children who reportedly told counselors and police officers of strange "games" or "plays" in which they were expected to engage. These often were said to involve sodomy, "devil" masks and robes, animal or human body parts, and even the "sacrifice" of babies.

The most notorious case was the 1984–1990 trial involving the McMartin preschool in a suburb of Los

Angeles, which ended up being the most expensive court case in California history. Despite extensive lurid testimony from children and parents, no "hard" evidence of crime was ever found, no bodies or definitely satanic artifacts, and in the end the defendant teachers and proprietors of the school were released after two successive juries had deadlocked. But the McMartin teachers, and other even less fortunate individuals who were actually convicted and imprisoned in these bizarre cases, found their schools, careers, and lives ruined nonetheless.<sup>5</sup>

It is now almost universally believed that the Satanic panic was spurious, despite its promotion by certain wings of resurgent evangelical Christianity. Perhaps it reflected anxious and changing times. This was nearly the first generation of families in which both husband and wife typically went out to work, perforce leaving young children in daycare centers and preschools. Deep concerns as to whether this was right, and what kind of care their precious young ones would have from surrogate parents, may have been projected into satanic fantasies. One can only speculate.

Third, as for the outsider, one need only mention the biblical Satan and his evolution in Christian lore. The traditional Satan is put together from scattered references throughout scripture, together with bits of Jewish and other folklore and extra-canonical apocalyptic, the Zoroastrian model of the eternal adversary of God, Ahriman, lord of the lie, over against Ahura Mazda, Lord of Light, and theological construction. But in the end it is a powerful picture, above all as painted by John Milton in his great epic poem, *Paradise Lost*—it has been said that the average Englishman believes everything in *Paradise Lost* is to be found somewhere in the Bible. Here Satan, even before Genesis, fought heaven and was therefrom cast out, reaching a place of "No light, but rather darkness visible," "regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace and rest shall never dwell, hope never comes that comes to all."

Nevertheless Satan, the great rebel against the omnipotent God, in words that some readers have found perversely appealing, declares his is "A mind not to be changed by place or time. The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n." For "To reign is worth ambition though in hell: better to reign in hell

But one senses this battle of wits will go on  
for a long time...

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than serve in heav'n." Thus the enemy of Good can declare, "Farewell, happy fields," and again, "Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost; Evil, be thou my good."

None other than this defiant and cunning being took the form of the lowly serpent with a view to spoil hated heaven by marring its greatest creation. Even he could not but pause for a moment before Eve: "Abashed the Devil stood, and felt how awful goodness is, and saw Virtue in her shape how lovely." But he continued with what he had set out to do.

The biblical and Miltonic Satan reminds us that the author of evil, though from outside the world as we ordinarily know it, is nonetheless also a part of it, full of feelings and even gestures not entirely inhuman, even as the sociopath next door though strange seems also familiar. It is as though the alien is like a magnifying glass, enlarging for inspection what is already here though mixed in with everything else.

Fourth, the notion of the presence of evil as just part of the way things are is clearly implied in polytheistic myths of creation, and especially the divine twin kind of myth. Mircea Eliade once wrote of a folktale involving God and Satan from his native Romania. This story is found in variants throughout southeast Europe, and seems to be ultimately of Manichean and Zoroastrian derivation, through the former's medieval Bogomile descendant. It seems that before the creation of the world nothing there was but infinite sea, above which God and Satan dwelt together. Both appear to have existed since beginningless time, but God in some manner was superior to Satan; only he could create. When God then decided to create the world, he sent Satan to dive into the depths of the sea and bring up the "seed" of land. He was told to do so in the name of God, but the lesser immortal invoked instead his own name, and the mud slipped through his fingers when he brought it to the surface. Finally, the third time he took up soil in both his own name and God's; this time enough remained under his fingernails for God to use. The Deity made himself a mound of earth, and there he lay down to rest. Satan, thinking his companion was asleep, had the idea of pushing him into the water to drown, so then he alone would be master of earth. But the more the devil rolled God toward

the water's edge, the more land appeared under him, on and on until vast expanses of earth had replaced the primordial sea, and the evil one had to recognize the futility of his project.<sup>6</sup>

In this intriguing story both God and Satan are "twins," equal and of unknown origin. Both have the "trickster" quality of wanting to fool the other. Yet God has the edge; his stratagems work and the other's do not. But one senses this battle of wits will go on for a long time.

The modern "mythology" of popular entertainment refers back to that classic "evil twin" theme over and over. A *Star Trek* episode, "The Alternative Factor," shows a pathetic/heroic figure forever wrestling in a corridor between worlds with his anti-matter brother, each knowing that if either one got final supremacy over the other, all would be destroyed. In the TV series *Bewitched* Samantha Stevens had an evil twin sister, Serena. In *I Dream of Jeannie*, another glamorous modern witch narrative, Jeannie likewise had an unnamed evil twin sister. The idea of parallel universes, suggested as possible realities by some of the more cutting-edge ideas of recent cosmology and physics, is becoming a staple of speculative fiction, and an ideal medium for exploring dualistic, yet built-into-the-universe interpretations of good and evil.

These are mythic narratives that make both good and evil, as humans understand them, factored into the fabric of the universe as it is. It may be, however, that in such a universe man is not the measure of all things, and that from a different perspective, those energies that seem to us evil would have another meaning, or perhaps no meaning at all.

Fifth, as for the trivial mistake, here is an African creation story offering a wryly amusing tale about the origin of evil and death. Time and again on that often-troubled yet resilient continent, one encounters a spirit that seems to say, if we can't do anything about the human situation and its tragedies, why not just laugh instead of weep? Perhaps it is all a big joke, or a big comic mistake of some kind. Take for example the common myth of the failed messenger to explain human death.

The Limba people of Sierra Leone noted that the snake could avoid death, so it seemed, just by changing his skin. Afterwards, he looked bright and fresh as new. People said

## The essence of humor lies in the unexpected and incongruous...

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that originally humans were supposed to have been able to rejuvenate themselves the same way. But something went wrong.

What happened? First we have to meet Kanu, the Limba creator and High God. At the beginning, this all-competent yet sensitive deity had lived on earth among people and animals, but withdrew to heaven because the animals had refused to stop quarreling—not people in this instance!—when asked to make peace. While still on earth, Kanu had intended for both humans and animals not to die. He prepared a medicine that would prevent death. He gave part of it to the snake, and it worked for him. He then handed a bowl containing the rest of the elixir to the snake, telling him to take it to the Limba.

But the toad objected, saying the snake moved so fast he would spill it. Toad insisted on taking it himself, even though Kanu asked him not to. Nonetheless the amphibian put the vessel on his head, apparently in no great awe of this deity who seems more like part of the world than above it. He then started hopping, and when he hopped the second time the fluid of life all spilled. Kanu refused to make more owing to the disobedience of the toad, and for that reason all people and animals die, except the snake, who dies only if someone kills him.<sup>7</sup>

The point is not whether the Limba people necessarily believe a story like this exactly the way, say, a contemporary creationist claims to believe the book of Genesis. It is just a story, but one which inculcates a certain *attitude* toward the mysteries of death and evil, and it is not an attitude of solemnity or stoic resignation. One can imagine a good story-telling playing up this tale of Toad and Snake to great comic effect. The attitude is suggested that, if we can't do anything about evil and death, why not laugh instead of cry? The essence of humor lies in the unexpected and incongruous, and what is more so than that creatures as great as humankind should nonetheless suffer and die?

Sixth, as for the next category, myths in which the ordeals of initiation themselves seem evil, or in which the initiate becomes capable of doing evil as a result of the initiation, are not uncommon. The Berserkers of ancient northern Europe, for example, apparently were initiated by having to fight with bears or wolves as well as fellow Berserkers.

They were then initiated by having the skin of a bear or wolf put on them, thus acquiring the spirit of that animal, and with it the power to fight with the beast's merciless ferocity.

Or consider, for a more recent example, Peggy Sanday's study, *Fraternity Gang Rape*, from a superficially very different milieu, of an American college fraternity which had gotten into serious trouble because of episodes of "gang rape" at its parties. Yet the same Berserker motif, initiation into a bonding and a state of consciousness that makes acceptable what would be morally unacceptable on an individual basis, clearly obtains here. Initiation can lead one to do, as part of an initiate group, what otherwise one would not do, and if that thing is evil, then initiation is a source of evil.

The initiations of this fraternity were traumatic enough. An insider, identified as Sean, said, "We felt that salvation is achieved through brotherhood, and nothing else (certainly not our individuality) mattered at all."

After the taking apart of the individual in initiation, the brethren had no moral code except the brotherhood's; the fraternity was able to create a private society in which they could see those outside its parameters as weak, potential victims, in a real sense, subhuman. As Sean again put it:

Everyone and everything was open to ridicule, all people and all standards became vulnerable, because we had powerfully felt our own vulnerability [in the initiation]. That was our deepest kept secret, the thing that really separated us from the world outside: we knew how insignificant people can feel when they are really up against the wall—how insignificant we felt during initiation... Our initiation experience and new knowledge constituted the deepest insight and a sacred revelation... Now we could be masters of life... we could toy with it and watch with amusement as everyone else staggered blindly through it.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, in view of the fraternity's customary attitude toward women, as among those with whose lives they could "toy" and whose vulnerabilities they could exploit, the central figure in the myth behind their draconian ini-

## Even so, what can we do but laugh and enjoy the story?

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tiation is an “astral goddess.” The initiates claim that the secrets of the brotherhood were first given to them by a Greek goddess, and that it is to her astral plane that they ascend in initiation. But it is not uncommon for males who vaunt superiority over “real” women here on earth to profess devotion to a divine female figure.

In this, as in so many initiations, persons who feel powerless alone, as youths, as prisoners, as students, seek bonding to a group which collectively is all-powerful, perhaps its power strengthened all the more by identity with an animal or divine source of suprahuman power. But with this power they can work evil and well as good, and the temptation toward the former, for those who feel raised by the loss of self in initiation to a place beyond good and evil, is very great.

Seventh, a mythic figure placing evil somewhere between accident and tragedy, between joke and sorrow, is the trickster, well represented by that Native American troublemaker, Coyote. This animal is wily, cunning, ruthless, and unwilling to defer to anyone else, man, beast, or god. He is deliberately rebellious against the benign forces in the universe in a way Adam and Eve, in their naivety, perhaps were not. Coyote is out only for himself, and even his sense of humor has an edge to it, and his “jokes” can be cruel. Yet for all that, Coyote is appealing in his cleverness, his disguises and his ruses, by which he sometimes outsmarts even himself. For all his unscrupulousness and bad conduct, there is something captivating about the gamer’s limitless energy and seemingly inexhaustible bag of tricks. People who have made Coyote’s acquaintance rarely tire of hearing of his exploits, and Native Americans have enjoyed his tales around the campfire for centuries.

Coyote stories are a good example of the mythic story told in large part for entertainment, no doubt in many versions. Such myths are certainly not intended to be believed in any literal or profoundly theological sense even though they may recite important motifs: creation, life, and death. Yet such stories, like all myth, do have about them a tone or attitude indicating a way of relating to the world, even to the problem of evil. Are we to chuckle or lament at the rocky way the moral universe seems to be set up, or simply stand in awe before the first and last things?

In the case of Coyote, the suggestion is that much is

wondrous and beautiful about the world, yet the gods, humans, and animals animating it are not always reliable, though always entertaining. They can send currents in contrary directions, and go beyond what was intended. Even so, what can we do but laugh and enjoy the story?

Here is a Coyote story from the Maidu people of California:

At the beginning, when nothing lay below but endless waters, two beings, Earthmaker and Coyote, looked down and began talking about how the property might be developed. Earthmaker, a respectable god, wanted to create a good, decent world in which pain and death were not, and spouses remained faithful to one another. But Coyote said in effect, “Why not make it a little more interesting?”

He’s not exactly evil, and at first he and Earthmaker are not antagonists; the two are like good buddies talking enthusiastically about their new project, Earth. But clearly they are of different temperaments. One is straight, well-meaning, but a little dull and unimaginative; the other more interested in angles, and bursting with imagination: more than is called for, and enough to get him into trouble. Clearly the Maidu considered the world offered plenty of evidence for both these personalities at work in its dramas.

In time, Earthmaker and Coyote had a falling out. Earthmaker wanted the people he was making, when they died, to be placed in water overnight and then be able to rise up again the next morning; and he wanted even married couples to be celibate, since there was no need for procreation in a world without death. Coyote said of this:

But you, Earthmaker,  
are not speaking for human contentment and joy!  
But I speak for a world where men can laugh  
and feel good and come to take delight in themselves  
and in the women they care for.  
So then, an old man,  
flirting and playing around with a young woman,  
should feel like a lad again.  
And women should feel that way too.

Coyote obviously felt that a world without flirting, love, and sex was hardly worth living in, even if the price was death, for immortal life in such a world would be

... Eathmaker had no answer ...

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bound to get very boring.

To this, Earthmaker had no answer, so:

...he thought to himself:

“You, Coyote, have overcome me in everything;  
so then, without my saying so,  
let there be Death in the World.”

But, as happened more often than not, Coyote’s victory came back on himself. Not long afterward he sent his own fine son to fetch some water. On that simple expedition the boy was bitten by a rattlesnake, and died.

Then Coyote cried out [to Earthmaker]

“May I never say such things again!

You must make my son come back to life!

But Earthmaker paid no attention, and Coyote, full of anger and remorse as he learned what death meant in personal as well as theoretical terms, could only say of Earthmaker, “I will chase him no longer...I will never catch up with him.”<sup>9</sup>

Now in conclusion, let me affirm once again my gratitude for this wonderful occasion. I once had a t-shirt that said, “Oh God, it’s hard to be humble when you’re from the University of Chicago.” Though I’ve always prided myself on my humility, I have to admit that once in a great while I’ve been tempted to succumb to that pride. This afternoon is one of those occasions, I suppose, but I’m sure that mainly I will take from it happy memories that, as it were, complete a cycle in that part of a life that began here. ✖

### Endnotes

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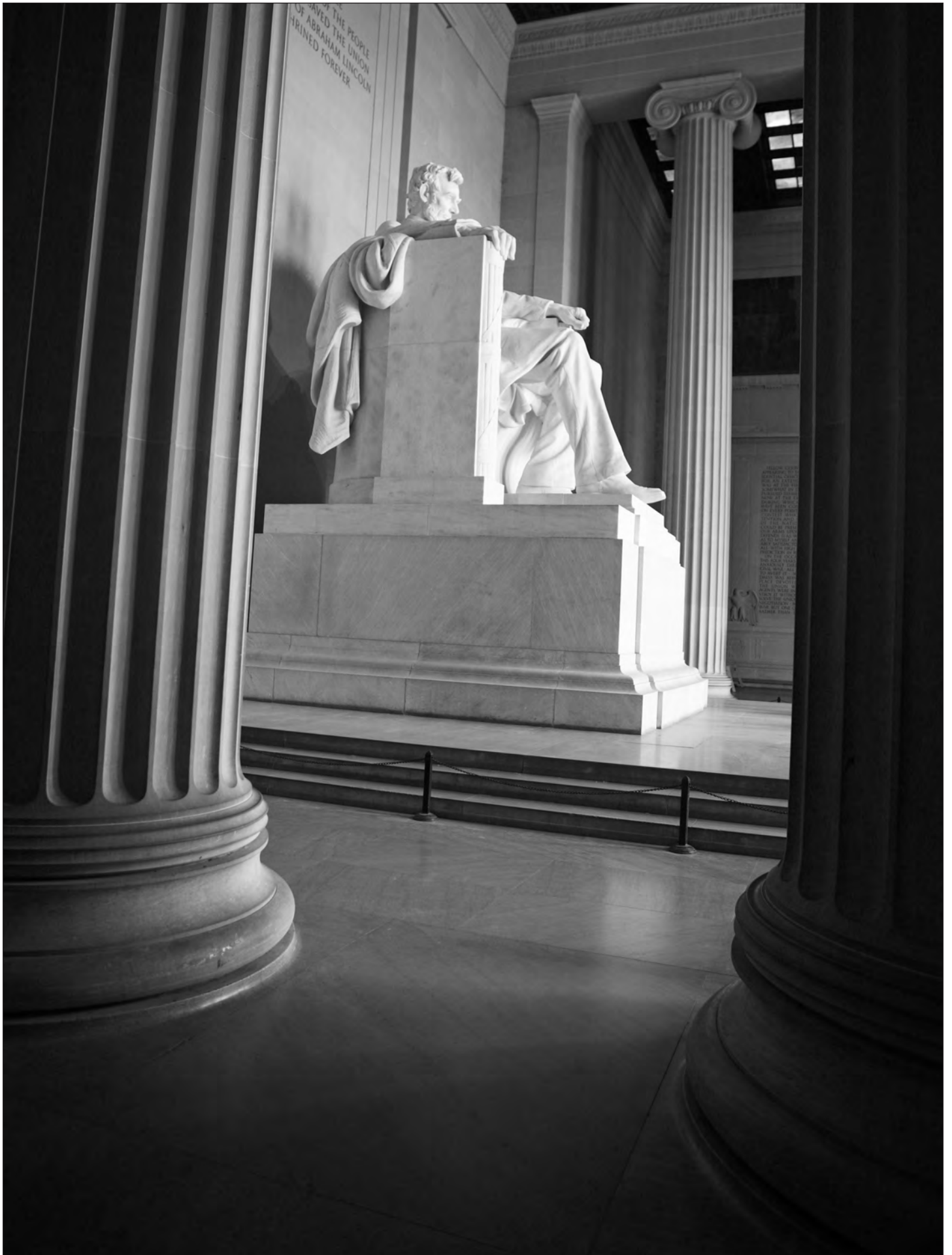
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# Lincoln and the Religious Question

**I**n our great national conflict, Lincoln noted as its ending approached, both parties “read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. . . . The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty,” Lincoln confessed, “has his own purposes.” No other United States president, I venture, surpasses Lincoln’s reflections on the religious meaning of politics.

In some measure, no doubt, he was compelled to such thoughts because he held the office when ultimate questions were starkly raised by political events: the Republic itself was put on trial by the schism of civil war. Still, on my reading, Lincoln’s religious reckoning with politics and war also exhibits his character as a man for whom our ultimate context provides the fitting and proper setting in which to interpret events and to participate in them.

At the least, profound religious sensibilities mark the man as he now lives in our national memory—and surely this results in part from Lincoln’s use of biblical allusions and religious symbols while giving singular eloquence to his own interpretations. Recall, for instance, his appeal to “the better angels of our nature” at the ending of his First Inaugural Address in 1860, as seven states in the South claimed to withdraw from the Union.

I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends.  
We must not be enemies. Though passion may have

strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearth-stone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Or consider the closing of his famous 1864 letter to Mrs. Bixby, the Massachusetts mother of five sons all killed in the war:

I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours, to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom.<sup>1</sup>

How readily this summons to mind the patriarchal faith of Abraham, willing on God’s calling to sacrifice Isaac, not to



It is this inclusive choice that is distinctively religious  
and incurably solitary...

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mention the willingness of God to give up God's own Son. And the New Testament theme of sacrificial death resonates with national import in the Gettysburg Address. The nation, having died through "the brave men...who struggled here" will, if "we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain," have "a new birth of freedom." As if to underscore the almost sacred context in which events on this battlefield occurred, the speech opens, echoing the ninetyeth Psalm, with the cadence of biblical accountings: "Four score and seven years ago...." Someone once invited notice of how spoiled the beginning would become were "Four score and seven" changed to "Eighty-seven years ago...."

For all that, however, it seems apparent that Lincoln himself never embraced the Christian faith in any sense inclusive of what were then common understandings of the incarnation and atoning sacrifice of Christ as the Son of God or second person of the Trinity. After Lincoln's death, Christians of virtually every stripe sought to claim him as one of their own. But most historians doubt, notwithstanding the critical support for his political success provided by evangelical Protestants, that he ever professed to be an evangelical Christian. How, then, might we understand his own reflections on the religious question?

I propose to approach this matter through what may be his best-known scriptural allusion—to the image in Mark's Gospel of a house divided, in the speech he gave on receiving the Republican nomination for Senator in 1858. "A house divided against itself cannot stand" (Mark 3: 25), Lincoln cited, as the storm of civil war gathered over the nation. "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*," he continued. "I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved*—I do not expect the house to *fall*—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing, or *all* the other." It might be said that Lincoln here took license in using the metaphor. In the Gospel, the image does not portray social and political conflicts that threaten human communities or governments. To the contrary, the human condition Mark has in focus exists in the depths of an individual person. It is not a breach between nations or within nations but, rather, a war within the soul, a discord within the human spirit

when it is possessed by demons—and a brief word about what is at stake for Mark will, I think, help us come to terms with Lincoln.

"Religion," one famous definition has it, "is what the individual does with his own solitariness."<sup>2</sup> If our defining power as humans is not only to live but also to lead our lives, in the sense that what we become is not simply the result of prior forces or instincts but depends on our own conscious decision, this is possible only because we each make and remake a fundamental and all-embracing choice about what gives ultimate meaning or significance to everything we are or could be. Our many choices about work and play, family and public life, always take their bearings from that inclusive decision in which we name the someone or something from which the very worth of life itself derives and which, therefore, commands all our heart and soul and mind and strength. It is this inclusive choice that is distinctively religious and incurably solitary, and it is in this household of the soul that Mark speaks of a division against itself.

The schism occurs because we humans so readily worship others in competition with the one true God who alone gives worth or meaning to our lives. Profit, position, privilege, or pleasure; family, class or country—virtually anything else at all can become a demon whenever we choose it in conflict with the God who alone is worthy of our worship. Mark's metaphor displays a self in fundamental self-contradiction and calls to mind the saying in Matthew: "No one can serve two masters.... You cannot serve both God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Still, Matthew's way of speaking can be misleading. If two masters create a problem, the conflict would seem resolved by dismissing either one or the other—God or mammon, divinity or the demon. If division results from having two, unity would seem restored by choosing either one, and this is not what Mark and Matthew mean to say.

On their witness, God cannot be dismissed, belief in God cannot be escaped, because only God can give life ultimate meaning, and thus we unavoidably affirm the divine presence in every moment of our lives by deciding to be or do something we assume to be worthwhile. So, the self becomes a living contradiction because one raises up

Lincoln . . . saw the national conflict as division  
in this radical sense.

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another alongside of God as if it, too, could do what one simultaneously believes only God can do. In this sense, admitting a demon is like adultery: the prior marriage defines one's true loyalty, and one is adulterous by acting as if someone else could occupy the place one simultaneously has vowed to one's betrothed. So within the soul: one's true loyalty is given by being a creature of God, and schism is the duplicity that occurs when a pretender is also avowed in our religious decision. Let us call this the radical sense of division against oneself—because the problem is not simply two competing commitments but, rather, a soul at odds with its own integrity, having embraced an enemy of its own essential nature.

Now, whatever license he may have taken with the metaphor, Lincoln nonetheless saw the national conflict as division in this radical sense. To first appearance, his house divided speech might seem to pose the problem simply as being half slave and half free, two incompatible commitments, whereby the government could endure and the Union remain intact if she became all the one or all the other. "I do not expect the house to *fall*," he said, "but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing, or *all* the other." But whatever his intent with those words, Lincoln was lucid, I am persuaded, that slavery betrayed the Republic itself, was an "enemy within" that threatened the very essence of the Union. There must be, he said in 1859, "a national policy in regard to the institution of slavery that acknowledges and deals with that institution as being wrong. . . . I do not mean to say that this general government is charged with the duty of redressing or preventing all wrongs in the world; but I do think it is charged with the duty of preventing and redressing all wrongs which are wrongs to itself."<sup>3</sup> The point is also made in another metaphor he used to display the danger. The South's peculiar institution was, he would say, a cancer within these United States. Cancer puts a living body in self-contradiction precisely because alien to life itself, and if the cancer wins out, life itself is wasted. Were the nation to become all slave, the Union would in that way just as surely be in ruin—because slavery is a life-threatening disease within this body politic; it contradicts the very nature of our political community.

Why is this so? Here is where, by my lights, Lincoln's religious reflections are vital. If not a confessing Christian in any proper meaning of those words, he was effectively at one with the Gospel of Mark in this: We humans require a source of ultimate meaning for what we do or become. Moreover, Lincoln became convinced, reality as an ultimate whole is a God from whom we all come and to whom we all go—a God whom, as the conflict and carnage over which he presided persisted, he saw the more as a mysterious, active God of history—and this God alone truly answers our religious question. And, for him, what followed above all was a universal moral order defined by our most encompassing context. The source of our ultimate meaning also gives an ultimate demand, namely, a calling to conform what we do and become to requirements of God's all-embracing will, insofar as we can discern what it is. Moral duty answers, as he once said, "through time and eternity."<sup>4</sup>

Many students of Lincoln's beliefs have remarked on what is sometimes called his fatalism. "I have found my life as Hamlet says," he reportedly conceded: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will." And Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, wrote after Lincoln's death that Mary Lincoln noted how many times she heard him say: "What will be will be and no cares of ours can arrest the decree."<sup>5</sup> "Fatalism" as belief in blind or mechanical necessity seems the wrong term, at least insofar as Lincoln during his presidency increasingly identified the supreme power as the will of an active God. The issue is whether—or, better, in what way—Lincoln endorsed a Calvinist account of so-called special providence, on which all the details of time and history are determined by divine sovereignty. As a child, he was likely introduced to Calvinist predestination in the Baptist church of his father, and he may well have been schooled in a sophisticated theology of complete divine determination by Phineas D. Gurley, the thoughtful minister at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, which Lincoln attended during his presidency. It is noteworthy that Calvinists generally and Gurley specifically, however strict their doctrine of special providence, nonetheless typically enjoined a demanding moral life. Lincoln likewise,

... division in the soul has its effects in the world.

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whatever doubts he had about human capacity to control events, yielded nothing on his bedrock belief that his actions and those of humans generally are bound to a moral order given in the nature of things, constituted by a wise and just God, without which events would be senseless, sound and fury signifying nothing.

And whatever else might be said about this moral order, nothing for Lincoln more clearly articulated its political requirement than the Declaration of Independence. The laws of nature and nature's God decreed that all are created equal and endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. "All the political sentiments I entertain," Lincoln recounted in a speech at Independence Hall in Philadelphia on Washington's birthday in 1861, have been drawn, so far as I can draw them, from the sentiments which originated and were given to the world from this hall. I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence." He considered the Declaration, as Madison once said, "the fundamental act of Union of these States,"<sup>6</sup> whereby it was, in effect, part of our Constitution—and thus apparent ambiguities in the latter should be read through the document from Independence Hall. So, if the Constitution was from the outset defiled by its purchase of union through a devil's pact with slavery, the Declaration's "all are created equal" was, for Lincoln, the Constitution's deeper meaning, whereby, as he put it, the authors "meant simply to declare the *right*, so that the *enforcement* of it might follow as fast as circumstances permit."<sup>7</sup>

When Lincoln referred, as often he did, to what "my ancient faith tells me," he meant, I think, his belief in the laws of nature and nature's God as specified to politics in the Declaration. As one biographer comments, moreover, Lincoln found "the scriptural basis for the Declaration in the book of Genesis: if humankind was created in the image of God, then 'the justice of the Creator' had to be extended equally 'to *all* his creatures.' "Nothing stamped with the Divine image and likeness," Lincoln once said, "was sent into the world to be trodden on, and degraded, and imbruted by its fellows"<sup>8</sup>—and he thereby echoed the words of his hero, Thomas Jefferson: "The mass of

mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God."<sup>9</sup>

So, here's the point: within the providence of God and the divine moral order, politics, at least in these United States, is meant to be rule by equals of equals, government *by* the people, *for* the people—is meant to be popular or democratic government—and it then follows that slavery is an "enemy within" of the Republic's very being. The Union cannot endure if slavery is found in one half of the states or all of the states or any of the states because it contradicts the essence of democracy. When he allowed that "the Almighty has his own purposes," aligned with neither North nor South, Lincoln perhaps acknowledged his own failures in policy or faults in prosecuting the war, or wondered why God permitted hostilities of such magnitude and duration, and he evidently was mindful of the North's share in causing the conflict. But he never doubted, so far as I can see, that the South's peculiar institution was treason to God's moral order and thus to the essence of American politics—and that is why I say that Lincoln spoke of a divided household in the radical sense, the sense found in the Gospel of Mark.

To be sure, he might still be accused of misusing the metaphor because he departed from the innermost question of ultimate meaning each individual must ask and answer in her or his soul and spoke instead about conflict within our common life. And yet, even here Lincoln's religious sensibilities are acute. For division in the soul has its effects in the world. The same writer who called religion "what an individual does with his own solitariness" also wrote that "religion is world loyalty,"<sup>10</sup> by which he meant that decision for the One from whom all things come and to whom all things go is a pledge of allegiance to all the world because it all belongs to that all-inclusive One. By the same token, then, those who embrace a demon as if it, too, could be God pledge their loyalty also to something within the world and, thereby, debase the rest. Whoever chooses against the whole, chooses for some part, and worship of something within the world divides the world just as surely as it corrupts the self. Those who worship their own wealth open a breach between rich and poor, those

Religious duplicity has political consequences...



who worship their flag set nation against nation, and those who worship their race create racism. Religious duplicity has political consequences, and Lincoln's use of Mark's image only follows the fullest meaning of the metaphor.

But, now, my reading of Lincoln on the religious question makes the slavery issue fundamental to his political self-understanding, and that conclusion has been deeply contested. On the extreme contrary interpretation, his intentions were focused entirely on preserving or restoring the Union, that is, simply preventing its division into separate nations, and the South's peculiar institution was pertinent only insofar as attention to it was instrumental to this narrowly political goal. His controlling purpose, this reading argues, was to vindicate the possibility of popular government against traditional European wisdom, for which politics requires some measure of aristocratic or monarchical control because the civil order is otherwise vulnerable to the instability conflicting popular enthusiasms will inevitably cause.

As one historian writes, "the event that precipitated [secession] was Lincoln's own election, which had been achieved by a constitutional majority according to constitutional procedures," and the South "now decided to leave

the Union just because it had lost an election"—and to this Lincoln replied: "Ballots are the rightful, and peaceful, successors of bullets; and...when ballots have fairly, and constitutionally, decided, there can be no successful appeal back to bullets."<sup>11</sup> For the narrowly political reading, then, Lincoln was fixed on proving the futility of this appeal back to bullets and thereby showing that a Republic can insure its own endurance—lest popular government be forever buried with the American experiment. Slavery in itself, therefore, was not the issue; he himself was not an abolitionist; and he became the "Great Emancipator" only because he was, so one author has it, "forced into glory" against his own racist attitudes.<sup>12</sup> Those who argue this case invariably cite Lincoln's letter to Horace Greeley, influential editor of the *New York Tribune*, in August, 1862: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would do that also."

I am not competent to the discussion of Lincoln's own persuasions with respect to race, including how, as is surely

... the restoration must now also be a reformation...

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the case, some lesser sentiments were educated by events during his presidency. Nor can I offer an informed interpretation of most among his many political speeches, letters, and statements. He did believe in the general wisdom, at least over the longer term, of widespread public sentiment—and while he also believed that politicians have both the power and responsibility to help shape public opinion, he “took his major decisions,” one judicious biographer concludes, “with at least one eye on popular feeling”<sup>13</sup>—and he typically sought more gradual dynamics of social change. At least publicly, for instance, he never advocated full political equality regardless of race, even if some words late in his life give promise that he might soon have taken that position.

But if this supports a more conservative reading of his intentions, it also counsels careful assessment of how his expression of principles and purposes might have been tempered by his political sense of the relevant situations, with an eye toward gaining the most circumstances allowed. “We shall,” he once put it, “sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, the slaves could not be freed unless the Union were restored, and a hasty commitment to emancipation as the war’s goal “could shatter the broad-based coalition on which that very restoration depended”<sup>15</sup>—especially given the dire necessity that the border states remain loyal to the Union. “I hope to have God on my side,” he said early in the war, “but I must have Kentucky.”<sup>16</sup> Understanding Lincoln’s own mind, I also expect, requires one to assess the difference between actions his own beliefs would prescribe and those within the authority he could claim under a Constitution that did indeed still include its original devil’s pact. The letter to Greeley concluded as follows: “I have here stated my purpose according to my view of *official* duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed *personal* wish that all men everywhere could be free.”

In any event, I am persuaded that Lincoln’s religious judgment on slavery was his well prior to his presidency. More or less throughout his political career, and certainly subsequent to Congressional repeal in 1854 of the Missouri Compromise, the South’s peculiar institution was, for him, a breach with the ultimate moral order, and if I am

right about the radical sense in which he took the practice to threaten the Republic, then proving the democratic experiment against traditional European wisdom and exorcizing slavery become inseparable ways of remaining true to the divine purpose. Because slavery could not be erased without constitutional amendment, the practice, Lincoln declared tenaciously before and into the early war, must be denied access to the territories—so that, as he said, “the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction.” Once he saw clear to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, crafted as a military necessity to be consistent with his constitutional powers, Lincoln would permit no turning back—and with this deed, he transformed the war’s purpose. No longer simply preservation of the Union as it had been, the restoration must now also be a reformation, the “new birth of freedom” he invoked at Gettysburg. “In *giving* freedom to the *slave*, we *assure* freedom to the free,” he said in defending the Proclamation. “We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth.”

For whatever it is worth, I also believe that Lincoln’s ancient faith belongs to the deepest level of his enduring legacy. On my reasoning, he had it right at least in this: Our politics can be authorized only by the laws of nature and nature’s God, and these call us to government by the people, for the people because the moral order within the nature of things affirms that all are created equal. So far as I am aware, the assertion that our democracy both requires and is required by a divine order is rarely articulated today, either in the public realm or in academic reflection. More often than not, democracy is said to be entirely a secularistic matter, whereby theism becomes merely a private preference—or, alternatively, religious voices effectively deny the sovereignty of “we the people” because they advocate political outcomes for supernatural reasons to which only adherents of their religion have access.

But even if one questions who Lincoln was earlier in his life or finds his most significant legacy elsewhere, can there be any doubt about the very core of his convictions in 1865 as he delivered his Second Inaugural address?

Both parties deprecated war; but one would *make*

... the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves.... These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war.... If we shall assume that American Slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, “the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether.”

What Lincoln says here perhaps confirms a sense that all is providentially determined, likely conveys his brooding over the seemingly inscrutable purposes of the God who has allowed this awesome bloodshed, clearly expresses his conviction that civil war was the recompense for the Republic’s duplicitous constitution, and surely seeks to underscore the complicity of the entire country in the offense, thereby leading to Lincoln’s concluding plea for malice toward none and charity for all. But whatever else is within these almost incredible words, they give unrivaled voice to the depth with which slavery is condemned by the ultimate nature of things. Slavery caused the war, and whatever the price exacted before the war shall pass, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Lincoln’s Second Inaugural alone, on my accounting, provides

full security for the conclusion that no other president surpasses his wisdom and eloquence on the relation between politics and religion. ✕

### Endnotes

1. Whether Lincoln wrote this letter is, I recognize, controversial. In citing it as his own, I rely on the conclusion of Roy P. Basler, editor of *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1946), republished in paperback by Da Capo Press; see 766–72. All citations from Lincoln, other than those subsequently footnoted, are taken from this collection.
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11. James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 28.
12. Lerone Bennett, Jr., cited in Carwardine, 191.
13. Carwardine, 49.
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# Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln

Saturday, March 4, 1865

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FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN: At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper.

Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the

other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations. ✕



1930 - 2009

## Tributes to Peter Homans

**P**eter Homans, Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School, died on Saturday, May 30, 2009, in Evanston, Illinois. The cause of death was complications from a recent stroke. Professor of Psychology and Religious Studies in the Divinity School, Professor Homans also held appointments in the Committee on Human Development and on the Committee on the History of Culture, as well as in the Social Sciences Collegiate Division. He joined the Divinity School faculty in 1965.

Best known for his groundbreaking work on the relationship between religion and psychology in the process of mourning, Professor Homans concentrated his teaching and writing on the histories, theories, and practices of mental and spiritual healing, especially on their roots in religious traditions. He also studied the symbolic and psychological aspects of contemporary cultures, focusing especially on forms of architecture that represent experiences of loss and gain, memory and forgetfulness, and creativity and regret.

His works included *Theology after Freud: An Interpretive Inquiry*, *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology*, and most notably, *The Ability to Mourn: Disillusionment and the Social Origins of Psychoanalysis*. All of his works reflect a lifelong interest in the important place of cultural and religious symbols in the psychological life

of the individual and the cultural life of a society. His last book was an edited collection, *Symbolic Loss: The Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at Century's End*.

Professor Homans is survived by his wife, Celia; their daughters Jennifer, Patricia, and Elizabeth; and six grandchildren.

Welcome and Comments on Peter Homans  
Richard A. Rosengarten

**W**elcome to Bond Chapel, and welcome to this memorial service in honor of Peter Homans. We are here to remember a husband, a father and grandfather, a brother-in-law, a colleague, a friend. No one of us in this assembly today has the ability to capture



He honored the insight that the human search for meaning and  
significance is our deepest impulse...

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all that Peter was in his life, but together we can and we should and we will evoke his remarkable effect on the world and mourn its loss.

Peter joined the faculty of the Divinity School in 1965 as Assistant Professor of Religion and Personality. He had completed his doctorate in that program brilliantly and was invited to join the faculty. Throughout the ensuing four decades he taught at the Divinity School, and in the Committees on the History of Culture and Human Development and in the College. He was by all accounts a wonderful teacher—superb both in his conception of courses and in his meticulous preparation for each individual session. Peter also recognized that teaching occurred not only in the classroom, and he was especially generous about student appointments. He was democratic in that generosity: over the years his extraordinary success as an advisor of doctoral students was matched, academic year by academic year, by his popularity among undergraduates.

Peter also wrote three lucid, compelling, and informative books, many learned essays and reviews, and edited an important volume on symbolic loss. To reread him today is to be reminded of the manifest care and skill that went into their composition. They reflect enormous erudition and analytical skill, and they present literally not one wasted word. The work of the scholar is by its nature slow and cumulative, a commitment in the end to the conviction that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Peter's scholarship exemplifies that commitment and, in its accomplishment, its truth.

Peter worked in what was during his student days described as one of the “dialogical fields.” These were the formal academic programs at the Divinity School that pursued the then radical idea that religion was decisively a form of culture, and that to understand religion we needed not only to be conversant with, but to practice the disciplines that served human knowledge of those forms. Psychology and literary criticism were the two that the School had adopted.

Peter's work embraced psychology and, especially in *The Ability to Mourn*, literature. Like others of his colleagues, Peter developed a hermeneutic of culture and in turn of religion that deployed these conceptual tools. But

while for many over the years this process proved to be one of negotiating suspicion and retrieval and ultimately choosing one or the other—are you a friend of religion, or a foe?—Peter was remarkable because he steadfastly refused to choose a side. He honored the insight that the human search for meaning and significance is our deepest impulse and, as a consequence, at times our most thrilling and at others our most debilitating but always our most complex activity. Peter's thought evolved in magnificent ways over his career, but so far as I can discern he never abandoned that deep impulse.

All of this is somewhat abstract. I cannot resist closing with a story, because it illustrates one last, for me perhaps the most cherished, impression I have of Peter. Peter was a wit, by which I mean not a teller of jokes—although he was also that—but rather someone for whom style of discourse was ever and anon a function of substance. Whether he had this preternaturally or by cultivation is for me a matter of surmise, but he had it. One particular occasion illustrated this especially well for me.

Once when Peter and I were having lunch together and talking, I told him of my frustrations at my failure to persuade my students to view and then discuss Dreyer's 1923 “Joan of Arc” as a film—as a visual experience. Peter listened with that quiet animation that I always regarded as his own version of Freud's attention—sympathy on his face, complete patience and receptivity in every aspect of his person, yet a gleam in at least a corner of his eye that suggested a level of comprehension of my plight beyond what I myself had. Yes, he agreed, this was a real challenge. Somehow we worked around to a point where I asked if he would be willing to visit my class for a session before we saw Dreyer's film, and “look at some images” with the students. He agreed and we set a date.

Peter arrived for class with projecting equipment and no notes. I introduced him and he immediately turned off the lights and displayed on the screen a Rorschach ink blot. “What do you see?” he intoned, and the ensuing silence, enhanced by the darkness, was prolonged. A voice betraying uncertainty said, “Isn't that one of those inkblots?” “Yes,” came the reply, “but what do you see?” Shorter ensuing silence, and then the responses came, at first ten-

... part of what we loved about him was the big ideas—big, original ideas—  
and we loved his sense of certainty about them.

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tative and then tumbling forth as the students realized that Peter was not going to tell them what they were seeing, and indeed was quite interested in what they were seeing. Further images elicited quick replies, and the final set—various perspectives of a Holocaust memorial in Poland—left the group in genuine, which is to say thoughtful, silence. At this point Peter did speak, in that quiet but authoritative voice: “It’s crucial to pay attention to what you think you see, but it’s also crucial to pay attention to what you think you don’t.” Peter then rose, turned on the lights, and departed with a smile and a nod.

At our next session the conversation about Joan of Arc went beautifully.

Peter Homans:  
*Doktorvater*, Colleague, Friend

Diane Jonte-Pace

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**T**he Germans have a word for it: *Doktorvater*. We say thesis advisor, doctoral advisor. But the German word is much more evocative. It communicates the paternal role in the relationship. Peter was my *Doktorvater*, and the *Doktorvater* of a whole generation of students. He was the father of our intellects, the father of the work we would do during the next few decades.

As we knew from reading Freud (whom we read very closely, with Peter), relationships with fathers are heavily fraught with ambivalence. And this relationship was no exception. We were in love with Peter, and, of course, we harbored deep resentments. I’ll come back to the resentments later. First the love: part of what we loved about him was the big ideas—big, original ideas—and we loved his sense of certainty about them.

Peter understood how life and work are intertwined; how cultures and individuals are interwoven. He understood how we experience deep shifts after losing a sense of the value and significance of something we honor and cherish. He understood how transformative ideas and creative insights emerge after cultural disruptions. He understood why we love the cinema, and why psychology and

sociology burst forth, like Athena from the heads of Freud and Weber, a hundred years ago. All of this was part of a coherent and luminous vision of how culture works and how the unconscious works. Peter was doing a kind of “cultural studies” long before the term was in vogue.

We loved his vision. We loved his certainty about it; we were entranced. We absorbed it and pursued it in various ways in our own work. But, I have to admit—and here’s where the ambivalence comes in—Peter also puzzled and frustrated us. He was such an enigma!

We were bewildered by the paradoxes he embodied: he was fearless, but amazingly timid. He was supremely confident in his writing, but in person he could be awkward, stumbling. He understood culture so well, but sometimes he seemed to understand his students and their emotions so poorly. His spoken words ranged from the profoundly insightful, to the seemingly simplistic, to the impenetrable.

Peter wasn’t unaware of the way he embodied these paradoxes. He once told me, with a kind of ironic self-reflexivity, that he was troubled by his lack of spontaneity; that he was trying to practice being more spontaneous. “Practicing spontaneity!” Only Peter could come up with a koan like that as a project for self development! This sort of paradox both enraged and enthralled us. It led to endless conversations among his students: “what does Peter really want?” What does he feel? And *where* is the emotion?

In recent years I’ve been blessed with opportunities to get a glimpse of some answers to those questions. And, of course, as you’d expect among academics, the context was primarily textual. Not long ago Peter and I coauthored an article for the Psychoanalytic Institute’s *Annual*. He had presented some provocative ideas at a conference and shared them with me, asking if I would work with him. We spent two days talking in San Francisco at his daughter Liz’s home, and subsequently exchanged sixteen drafts of what became an essay on architecture, memorials, and cultural mourning. In that process I got a deeper look at the luminous reality that Peter had experienced and the way he saw its manifestations in the creative vision of architects and artists. We called the article “The Emotion in the Stone.” I couldn’t help thinking that the title was a clue to the paradox that had troubled me when I was his

## How Peter thinks and feels shines forth . . .

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student. Peter *was* the stone, etymologically as well as psychologically: *petra* is the stone. And the emotions were there, in stone, yes, but not inaccessible.

How Peter thinks and feels shines forth in another shared text, the final chapter of the book *Mourning Religion* that I edited with two other students of Peter. The chapter is a recorded conversation between Peter Homans and Paul Ricoeur. The two had spoken at length in Paris about ten years ago. They spoke about Freud, collective memory, cultural monuments, forgetfulness, illness, and disease. Peter gave me a very literal transcript of the conversation, complete with pauses, ellipses, coughs, and “ums,” and asked me to “take out the ‘ums’.” It was a new kind of editorial task for me. As I worked through the document I felt as if I had been present at the actual conversation. Not only did I get to see “the emotions in the stone,” but I also got to watch Peter “practicing spontaneity.” At one point in the conversation, grasping the meaning in Ricoeur’s multilayered wit, he exclaimed, “Oh, a joke, a meaningful joke. OK, I’m catching on.”

In that conversation they spoke of things we’re experiencing powerfully today as we remember Peter: the way that memory bridges the gap between presence and absence, the tension between grief and mourning, the loss of oneself in the loss of someone else, the way that memory embodies mourning when it accepts that loss is really loss, and the way that buildings can function as monuments to emotions and collective memories. The conversation took place shortly before Ricoeur died; we published it not long before Peter died. To me the text feels uncanny in its evocation of what we’re feeling here in Bond Chapel, in a place where a building of stones holds our emotions, our experience of loss, and our memories of Peter.

I want to end my remarks with words Peter wrote twenty-five years ago that are particularly fitting today. He said, in a lovely article on “Psychoanalysis: East and West,” “Mourning must be seen as a special kind of healing. . . Mourning brings people together into community in a way that nothing else quite does. . . . It is mourning that is the essential ‘psychological universalism’—that forms the human community, the invisible family of man.” Today

we mourn the man—*Doktorvater*, colleague, and friend—who brought us into community through his life and ideas, and who brings us again into community through his death.

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### Peter Homans Memorial

Jennifer Homans

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I thought I would begin by saying a few things that may be less known about my father. The first is that he grew up in New York City. His father was a banker and as a child he did not fit easily into the conservative world of his parents. He loved the city for its freedoms and liked to recall long afternoons spent with friends at the picture-shows and at the penny arcade on 42nd street.

As a young man, he served in the Marines and went to boot camp; he was proud of this and once showed me his honorable discharge papers. He knew how to handle a rifle and once won a prize for his steadiness of aim. He was an ace shot, and this pleased him greatly. When he married my mother she made him give up his gun, but he had a lifelong fascination for military history and could relate battle strategies in fantastic detail.

My father had heroes. Foremost among them, of course, Freud, Weber, and Durkheim: “get to know these guys,” he liked to say, “grapple with them and you will really know something.” But it was not just great minds he

## My father had heroes.

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admired: he also revered great generals, great surgeons, and above all great film directors. He dreamed of becoming a movie director and especially loved Westerns: his favorite directors were John Ford and George Stevens. I was brought up on a steady diet of *Shane* and *High Noon*, and I like to think there is a resemblance between Gary Cooper's cool reserve and my father's own dignified intelligence.

My father loved cars and knew a lot about them. When he was still a teenager, he and his best friend Guy Lebalme bought a 1936 Packard convertible, took it apart, reassembled it and drove it across the country. He loved compasses, odometers, measuring devices too. As a child on family trips he liked to cover himself with a dark blanket and—armed with compass, map and flashlight—navigate the journey. Many years later, when he and my mother traveled with my own family in Europe, we would often get lost. On many a remote French and Italian country road, he jumped out of the car flourishing his compass, spread the map across the roof of the car, and solved the problem.

Among the many things we *do* know about my father, there is one that matters most of all: my mother, his wife and his greatest love. They could not have been more different. He was from a tawny New York banking and government clan; she was a Methodist girl from Asheville, North Carolina. He was internal, intensely intellectual, at times withdrawn and dreamy; she was outgoing, warm, and practical.

But they had something very important in common: They had both left their pasts behind. My mother was a Southerner who came North and West, and never went back to the South, except for visits; my father was slated to be a banker or lawyer on the East Coast—instead he went his own way and became a professor at the University of Chicago.

They made their lives together from scratch in Hyde Park. Times were not always easy, but they admired and adored each other. They were devoted and above all loyal. They understood each other and shared an insatiable



This is what he did in his life: he built worlds...

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intellectual curiosity. They made pilgrimages to museums across Europe, sitting together for hours in front of a favorite canvas. In recent years my father read *War and Peace* aloud to my mother. "Those Russians," he would say, "WOW."

My mother, my father liked to say, had tremendous grace and "true grit." And so she does.

When I was eighteen my father gave me a book of poetry by Gerard Manley Hopkins. He had written his undergraduate thesis at Princeton University on Hopkins and loved his work. We read many of the poems together, but he dwelled on one in particular: *The Windhover*. It is a religious poem, but we did not talk about this. Instead, we talked about its language and beauty. One verse in particular has always stayed with me: "Sheer plod makes plough down sillion Shine..." I have thought about this a lot since my father's death: about how hard work can produce art of great beauty, about how "sheer plod" can "make plough down sillion Shine." My father had plenty of "sheer plod" in him: he worked hard at everything he did, and he was always thinking and pressing his thoughts further, deeper, until they yielded the kind of beauty he was after. *The Windhover*, I came to realize, was not just a poem but a moral compass. It was a way of living—a way of living.

On one of my last visits with him, my father pulled me into his study. He showed me a reproduction of John Singer Sargent's *El Jaleo*. It is a picture of a Spanish dancer at the height of her performance: life at its most intense. Then he pulled out his Rorschach blots, which he had been wielding since I was a child, and explained in great detail why he thought they mattered to the painting. When he had done that, he turned to me and said: "you know, Jen, don't you think that is what Twyla Tharp was trying to do in her ballet *In the Upper Room*." It was an astonishing feat: he had conjured a world, as if by magic. It was a convincing world, full of truth and beauty. It made sense. This is what he did in his life: he built worlds—he really believed in them—worlds of the imagination that would link us all together in meaningful ways. Worlds that made you feel you had 'got it.'

After my father died, I went back to his book *The Ability To Mourn*. He begins and ends the book with a passage from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The passage contains Prospero's words to his daughter and her future husband at the end of the betrothal masque he has conjured for them by means of his magic.

*Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vexed.  
Bear with my weakness, my old brain is troubled.*

When Prospero is done speaking, and before all of the actors exit, Ferdinand and Miranda reply in words that might also be ours to my father here today:

*"We wish your peace."*

# Books in Brief

## Recent Selections from Faculty

To close this issue of *Criterion*, we offer a small ‘books in brief’ section. Divinity School faculty members Catherine Brekus, Wendy Doniger, Dwight Hopkins, William Schweiker, and Michael Sells have provided nutshell reviews of a recent book (or two) they have enjoyed and recommend to alumni.

### Catherine Brekus

Associate Professor of the History of Christianity

Marilynne Robinson

#### *Gilead*

(Farrar Straus Giroux, 2004)

AND ITS SEQUEL —

#### *Home: A Novel*

(Farrar Straus Giroux, 2008)

*Gilead*: the land where the Israelites longed to be healed. “Is there no balm in Gilead?” the prophet Jeremiah asked. *Home*: the sanctuary where children hope to find love, acceptance, and redemption. Marilynne Robinson’s two novels,

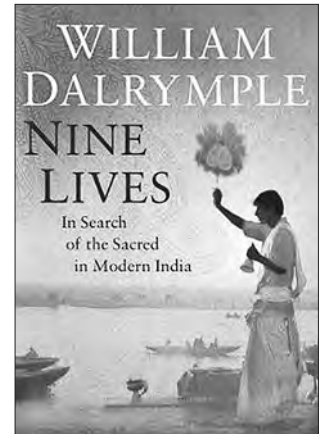
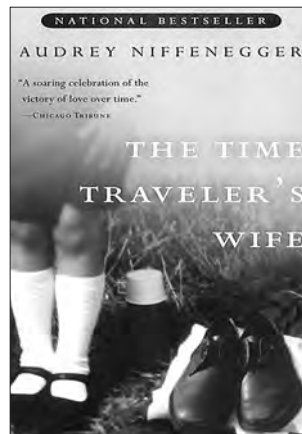
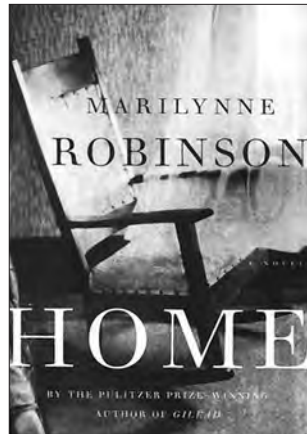
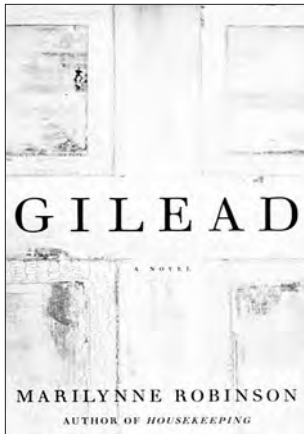
the first published in 2005 and the second in 2008, rank among the most moving fictional portraits of Christian life that I have ever read. In *Gilead*, which is set in Iowa in 1956, she tells the story of John Ames, a seventy-six year old Congregationalist minister who, knowing that his death is imminent, writes a long letter about his life to his six-year-old son. With a keen eye for the grace that infuses everyday life, Robinson writes about grief, forgiveness, and the unshakable love of parents for their children. In *Home: A Novel*, which takes place at the same time as her first book and reprises the main characters,

Robinson shifts her angle of vision to Robert Boughton, Ames’s best friend since childhood, who wants to make peace with his self-destructive son, Jack, before it is too late. Because it is not clear whether Jack can be redeemed, *Home* is a darker book than *Gilead*, but Robinson paints an unforgettable portrait of a prodigal who yearns for the love of his father—and his God.





“A splendid tale by a master narrator who delights with his pen...” — William Schweiker



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### Wendy Doniger

Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service  
Professor of the History of Religions

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injustice, loss, and, often, horror,  
and shows how their engagement in  
often violent forms of religion is  
their salvation.

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### William Schweiker

Director of the Martin Marty Center  
and Edward L. Ryerson Distinguished  
Service Professor of Theological Ethics

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### Audrey Niffenegger

#### *Time Traveler's Wife*

(Mariner Books, 2004)

A clever, engaging, and often  
deeply moving tale which is about  
Chicago and, though not much  
about religion, very much about  
the metaphysics of time, and  
loss, and love.

### Will Dalrymple

#### *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*

(U.S. edition forthcoming  
Knopf, 2010)

An important and beautiful book  
about religion has just been pub-  
lished in London. It plunges into  
the lives of nine people in India  
whose lives and, sometimes, souls  
have been destroyed by war,

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### Dwight Hopkins

Professor of Theology

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### Huilin Yang and Daniel H.N. Yeung, ed.

#### *Sino-Christian Studies in China*

(New Castle, England:  
Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006)

An excellent exemplar of the vigor  
and creativity of Chinese scholars,  
especially in the field of religious  
studies. In the last twenty years,  
there has been an explosion in the  
studies of Christianity in China.  
This edited work contains all the  
major voices who are pioneering a  
new relation between the Christian  
religion and the new China.

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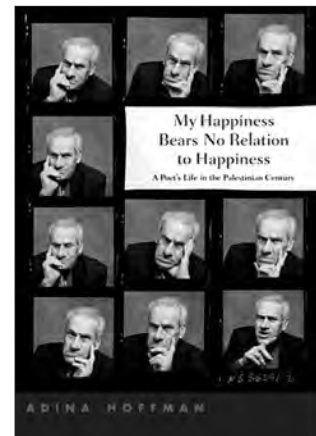
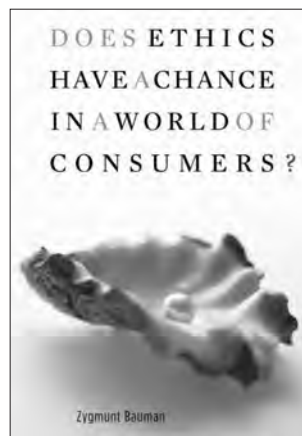
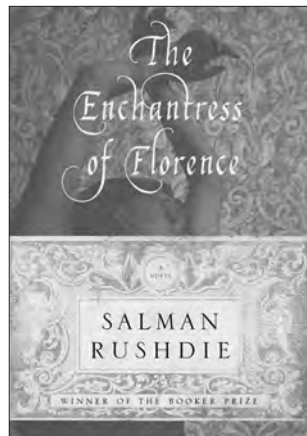
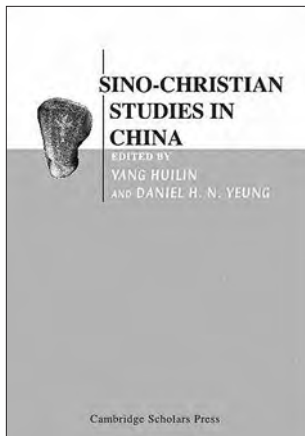
### Salman Rushdie

#### *The Enchantress of Florence*

(New York: Random House, 2008)

In this volume, Salman Rushdie  
explores the meeting of East and  
West through a tale that mixes fan-  
tasy and history. A young European  
traveler who calls himself “Mogor  
dell’Amore” arrives at the court of  
the Grand Mughal—the Emperor  
Akbar. Bewitching the court and the  
Emperor with his charm, grace, and  
trustworthiness, the yellow-haired  
young man claims to be the son of  
the lost and greatly beautiful Qara  
Köz, “Lady Black Eyes,” the Mughal  
princess. She is believed to have  
powers of enchantment and becomes  
the lover of Argalia—the European.  
They return to Florence, his child-  
hood home, where two worlds meet  
and collide under the power of her

“...among the five ‘must read’ books on the Israel-Palestine tragedy.” — Michael Sells



presence—having been seen as enchanting is later scorned for sorcery. And while in Florence the young traveler, now much aged, meets his childhood friend, Machiavelli. What unfolds in this delightful story are profound reflections on love and imagination, the nature of power and its limits, and the complexity of the human story. A splendid tale by a master narrator who delights with his pen even as his tale pierces the veils that we cast over others, and they over us.

Zygmunt Bauman

*Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*

(Harvard University Press, 2008)

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has long been admired and widely read for his reflections on the contemporary age, what he has dubbed “liquid modernity.” In this volume he continues this inquiry in an open and engaging style. He asks, as the book’s title has it, whether or not

ethics—and so the claim of others’ lives on our own—can survive amid the whirlwind of global consumption, the memories of mass murder from the twentieth century, and also the accelerating “speed” of contemporary life. Each of these forces of “liquid modernity” threaten to erode moral sensibilities and the skills needed to sustain social life. Importantly, Bauman challenges the “knowledge class” to overcome their estrangement from the rest of society and assume their social and moral responsibility. Citing Vaclav Havel, he notes that “hope is not a prognostication.” Hope, like courage and will, is a mundane weapon seldom used in the struggle for what is morally good and absolutely essential in a world of consumers.

Michael Sells

John Henry Barrows Professor of Islamic History and Literature

Adina Hoffman

*My Happiness Bears No Relation to Happiness: A Poet's Life in the Palestinian Century*

(Yale University Press, 2009)

A superbly composed meditation upon memory, truth, and conflict in the Middle East. The texture of Hoffman’s prose, the improbable transformations of key characters, and above all their human depth and complexity, contribute to a luminous portrait of the Palestinian poet Taha Muhammad Ali and of his world. I would place this book among the five “must read” books on the Israel-Palestine tragedy.

# Alumni News



W. BOYD BARRICK, Ph.D. 1977, has published a new book, *BMH as Body Language: A Lexical and Iconographical Study of the Word BMH when Not a Reference to Cultic Phenomena in Biblical and Post-Biblical Hebrew* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 477; London: Continuum/Clark, 2008). Barrick is a former Dean of Arts and Sciences at Montana State University, Billings, and since 2000 an occasional instructor of English and Religion. His last book was *The King and the Cemeteries: Toward a New Understanding of Josiah's Reform* (Leiden, 2002).

ALAN L. BERGER, A.M. 1970, is Raddock Family Eminent Scholar Chair of Holocaust Studies at Florida Atlantic

University. He recently coauthored *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Drawing Honey from the Rock* (Paragon House, 2008) and coedited the *Encyclopedia of Jewish-American Literature* (Facts on File, 2009).

REVEREND DONALD L. BERRY, B.D. 1950, is the Harry Emerson Fosdick Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Religion, Colgate University. He has published a new book, *Holy Words and Holy Orders: As Dying, Behold We Live* (University Press of America, 2009).

BILL BURROW, A.M. 1978, Ph.D., 1987, retired in February 2009 from twenty years as Managing Editor of Orbis Books in Maryknoll, New York, and was appointed Research Professor of Missiology in the World Christianity Program at New York Theological Seminary. During his years at Orbis, Bill coordinated acquisitions in the areas of interreligious, intercultural, historical, and ecological studies at Orbis. He is working on a book entitled *Mission, Church, Cultures in the Theology in Global Perspective Series* edited by Peter C. Phan at Orbis (forthcoming, 2010).

ROGER F. COOPER, M.A. 1966, also holds a Psy.D. and is an Organizational Development Consultant in Florida. In Fall, 2008, he was elected president-elect of the Society of Psychologists in Management (SPIM), an organization of professional psychologists who function as managers and consultants.

VOLNEY P. GAY, Ph.D. 1976, Professor and Chair of Religious Studies, Professor of Anthropology, and Professor of Psychiatry at Vanderbilt University has published two new books: *Progress and Values in the Humanities* (Columbia University Press) and *Neuroscience and Religion* (Rowman & Littlefield). The second is dedicated to Don S. Browning, Professor Emeritus of the Divinity School. Both books continue conversations about science and humanities that began at Chicago a long time ago.

CHESTER GILLIS, Ph.D. 1986, has been appointed Dean of the College at Georgetown University. He is the Amarturo Chair in Catholic Studies in the Department of Theology and the Director of the Program on the Church and Interreligious Dialogue at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs.

MARK GRANQUIST, Ph.D. 1992, was recently appointed Associate Professor of Church History at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. He had previously taught for fifteen years in the Religion departments of St. Olaf and Gustavus Adolphus Colleges.

PERRY HAMALIS, Ph.D. 2004, was the recipient of the junior faculty award at North Central College, where he is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Philosophy and director of the Office of Academic Opportunities. He is one of the panelists on the television show *Ask God* on the Total Living Network.

JAMES G. HART, M.A. 1968, Ph.D. 1972, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Indiana University, has just published his opus obesum, *Who One Is, Book 1: Meontology of the "I": A Transcendental Phenomenology, Book 2: Existenz and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009) in the *Phaenomenologica* series. In addition to academic research and writing, he has also been working on the reform of the local criminal justice system in Bloomington, Indiana.

DEREK S. JEFFREYS, Ph.D. 1998, is Associate Professor of Humanistic Studies and Religion at The University of Wisconsin–Green Bay. He has recently written *Spirituality and the Ethics of Torture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), which deals with how torture spiritually assaults the person, and calls for an absolute ban on all forms of torture.

LOIS MALCOLM, Ph.D. 1998, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary, has published

a new book, *Holy Spirit: Creative Power in Our Lives* (Augsburg Fortress Press, 2009).

COLIN ONG-DEAN (formerly Colin Dean), A.M. 1993, who also holds a Ph.D. in Sociology, is Assistant Project Scientist in the Education Studies Program at the University of California–San Diego. He has published a new book, *Distinguishing Disability: Parents, Privilege, and Special Education* (University of Chicago Press, 2009). The book reveals the ways in which advocacy for disabled children's educational rights often depends on their parents' cultural and economic resources.

DAVID L. PERRY, A.M. 1982, Ph.D. 1993, is Professor of Applied Ethics and Director of the Vann Center for Ethics at Davidson College, North Carolina. He has recently published *Partly Cloudy: Ethics in War, Espionage, Covert Action, and Interrogation* (Scarecrow Press, 2009).

GARY PELUSO-VERDEND, Ph.D. 1991, has been selected the new president of Phillips Theological Seminary, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

EDWARD A. PHILLIPS, JR., M.A. 1971, Ph.D. 1979, is Professor and Chair of the Department of Classics at Grinnell College. He has coauthored (with Mechtilde O'Mara) volume 43 of the *Collected Works of Erasmus, the Paraphrases on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thesalonians* (University of Toronto Press, 2009).

MARK TOULOUSE, Ph.D. 1984, has been confirmed by Victoria University's Board of Regents as the twelfth principal of Emmanuel College. Toulouse's appointment began in January 2009. Emmanuel, federated with the University of Toronto, is Canada's largest United Church theological college and a founding member of the Toronto School of Theology.



ROBERT TRAER, D.Min. 1969, is the author of *Doing Environmental Ethics* (Westview Press, 2009). He has a Ph.D. in comparative ethics from the Graduate Theological Union and a J.D. from the School of Law at the University of California at Davis. Traer now teaches ethics at the Dominican University of California in San Rafael, and is also the author (with Harlan Stelmach) of *Doing Ethics in a Diverse World* (Westview Press, 2008).

REVEREND HERBERT F. VETTER, A.B. 1957, B.D. 1952, is Minister at Large, Emeritus, at The First Parish in Cambridge. He has recently served as Editor of several publications, *Notable American Unitarians*, Vol. 2: 1936–1961 (Harvard Square Library, 2007), *A New World View by Charles Hartsborne* (Harvard Square Library, 2008), *Harvard's Unitarian Presidents* (Harvard Square Library, 2008), and *James Luther Adams: Prophet to the Powerful* (Harvard Square Library, 2008).

JAY WEXLER, M.A. 1993, is a Professor of Law at Boston University, where he teaches courses on law and religion and on the first amendment, among others. His first book, *Holy Hullabaloo: A Road Trip to the Battlegrounds of the Church/State Wars* (Beacon Press, 2009), is a first amendment travelogue/memoir/comedy.

## LOSSES

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ADITYA BEHL, M.A. 1989, Ph.D. 1995, died on Saturday, August 22, 2009. He had been on medical leave from the University of Pennsylvania, where his broad learning and effervescent intellect equipped him for the leadership role he played in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of South Asia Studies. An erudite expert on Indo-Muslim literature, particularly Sufi and narrative poetry, and Sultanate and Mughal cultural history, Dr. Behl's translations were both a joy to read and a challenge to consider, and he was widely known and respected in his field. He is survived by his parents, his sister, his brother-in-law, and his nephew.

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You may also update your contact information in the University's online directory, which can be accessed from the Divinity School's Web site, at <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/alumni/>.

For information on alumni giving and volunteering opportunities, please contact Mary Jean Kraybill, Director of Development, at 773-702-8248 or [mjkraybill@uchicago.edu](mailto:mjkraybill@uchicago.edu).



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# Alumni News Information

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