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Cover and Inside Cover

The bowl (cover) and shell bracelets (above) are five millennia old artifacts from the ancient Near East which are part of a collection of pottery recently given to the University Art Collection of Valparaiso University. On pages 13 through 20 of this issue Walter E. Rast, Professor of Theology at Valparaiso University, discusses the archaeological significance of this pottery collection.


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**That They May Have Life**

Hannah Arendt in The Human Condition observed that the deep reversal Christianity worked upon the ancient world came with its good news of the immortality of the individual human life. (Not, it should be noted, the immortality of the soul, but the immortality of the individual human life.) The Christian view of immortality differed fundamentally from the Hebrew view of the immortality of the people and the pagan views of the immortality of the state or the world. In one blow, Christianity reversed ancient relationships between man and his world and promoted the apparently most mortal thing, the individual human life, to the rank of the immortal.

The cultural implications of this view of immortality were, to put it mildly, considerable. It not only aroused a deep un-gnostic other-worldliness in the West but also enormously increased the importance of each individual human life in this world. Christianity insisted that such a life may be only the first stage of eternal life, but without this stage—which may indeed be miserable and surely ends in death—there cannot be the next stage of eternal life in the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.

Each human life was thus invested with great moral seriousness and became each man’s highest good. Only God could take such a life, and only a cause of God could justify a man who takes the life of another man—or a man who lays down his own life.

The belief that individual human life is each man’s highest good more or less survived the secularization of the West and the general decline of the Christian faith until, possibly, our own day. Of late there are more and more signs that human life is again being viewed in a pagan light. That is, certain conditions of life have become some men’s highest good, and it often appears that individual human life may be sacrificed to those conditions and judged worthy or not by them. For the more obvious signs of the times here read: abortion, euthanasia, suicide, and genetic engineering.

Leading us into one aspect of this possible cultural shift in the Western view of human life is our September alumni columnist, Dierdre A. Burgman. Having taken her B.A. in English in 1970 and her J.D. in 1979, she was admitted to the Indiana Bar and served as a law clerk for the Honorable Paul H. Buchanan, Chief Judge of the Indiana Court of Appeals. This past year she has published in the DePaul Law Review, the Valparaiso University Law Review, and the Cresset. This fall Dr. Burgman returned to the University as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Law.

The University welcomes the return of alumna Burgman to the campus, and the Cresset welcomes her to In Luce Tua.

**In Luce Tua**

**Perish the Day of Birth**

**The Emerging Concept of Wrongful Life**

Dierdre A. Burgman

Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.

Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. *Job 3: 8, 4*

A maxim lawyers are fond of quoting states, “For every wrong, there is a remedy.” This is overbroad, as our legal system admits some injuries are beyond its reach. The trend, however, is to accord compensation (a “remedy”) to more and more wrongs: the system offers an increasingly vast array of claims individuals may bring against those who have wronged them, causing pain, embarrassment, or expense. Through the judicial branch, new sorts of claims receive legal recognition by way of analogy: if a new claim is somehow like a previously sustained one, chances are the courts will allow recovery. Syllogistically, the law provides expanding opportunities for litigation by building extension upon extension. The outer boundaries of this process were touched in June of this year when the California Court of Appeals adopted the astounding proposition—previously rejected by several other states—that a person’s own life can be a legal wrong to him.

California’s holding was a foreseeable extension of existing law, for life has been viewed for several years as a legal injury to others: parents of an unplanned child may recover monetary damages from negligent doctors who made ineffective sterilizations or abortions. Parents sue for the expense of delivering, rearing, and educating such a child; they even recover for the mental pain and suffering of raising a child they did not want. Such a “cause of action,” or claim, is now acknowledged by most states as a valid lawsuit; some states actually condition recovery on abnormality of the child, thus encouraging the plaintiff-parents to argue their child’s defects, as if protesting the inferiority of some inanimate product. This type of lawsuit is indeed well-established.
Without prescribing adoption as an alternative, courts hold that the life of an unwanted child is legally a wrong, just as surely as is a dent in a fender or the careless polluting of a stream. Because the courts operate using analogies, these “wrongful birth” lawsuits formed the basis of arguments for what California has now deemed compensable as “wrongful life.”

“Wrongful life,” then, takes the principle one step further, focusing on the individual’s own life. Typically it arises when a physician or genetic counselor fails to give prospective parents accurate information about their future child’s genetic make-up. Not cognizant of the probabilities of his being somehow abnormal, they allow him to be conceived or fail to have him aborted. The child is born mentally or physically impaired; in the California case, for instance, the baby was afflicted with a degenerative disorder, Tay-Sachs disease. In bringing the lawsuit, the plaintiff-child’s assertion is that if correct advice had been given his parents, he would not have been brought into the world to suffer an imperfect life. Such life, he claims, is a legal wrong to him for which he should be granted monetary relief.

But present-day law is ill-equipped for such a claim, even in the wake of its granting damages to parents for unwanted children. The idea underpinning our law of damages is “to put the plaintiff in the position he would have occupied but for the injury.” If the child would have been born “normal” except for the physician’s negligence, the law would compute the difference between normal life and defective life. Admittedly, it would be an artificial calculation, for abnormality would have to be translated into dollars. Nevertheless, costs of increased medical care, as well as the difference in expectable wages, would provide some groundwork; compensation for pain and suffering would be added, and eventually a figure would be reached. This monetary figure would represent the law’s attempt to place the plaintiff in the position he would have enjoyed had the injury not occurred.

When the injury is one’s own life, however, it is clear that placing him in that position is quite impossible, for his place before the injury is non-existence. After all, the physician has not caused the abnormality; the child would not—indeed, could not—have been born abnormal, healthy baby. The physician has only omitted to give advice leading to contraception or abortion. Thus, computing damages in this context does not mean weighing life without defects against life with defects. It means weighing life with defects against no life at all.

The Law and a Negative Value on Life

In order to find compensable “damage,” therefore, the law must place a negative value on life. To do so is inconsistent with our legal tradition. In “wrongful death” lawsuits—for example, a car accident resulting in a death—the law has always presumed a positive value, regardless of the nature of the life. The death of a deformed or retarded child, therefore, is compensated with money damages; so is the death of an elderly or ill person. A wrongful death lawsuit may be maintained for the death of a child only minutes old, as well as, in most states, the death of a child in utero. Quality of life has never heretofore impugned its positive value. In fact, the only hesitancy has been against identifying an exact positive value, rather than simply accepting life as a “priceless” possession.

Even apart from assigning an identifiable value to life, the law has impliedly acknowledged life as having genuine worth. The law does not countenance euthanasia, for instance, as a benefit to society. Many states punish attempted suicide as a societal offense, and all states are said to have sufficient interest in potential life to restrict or even deny abortion in the final trimester of pregnancy. The fifth and fourteenth amendments to the Constitution prohibit the deprivation of “life” without due process of law. This formidable—and by no means exhaustive—body of jurisprudence demonstrates that life is not perceived as a dispensable, undesirable entity.

Neither is life so perceived by the Judaeo-Christian tradition. As Job’s lesson teaches, life is a gift of God, and suffering is an inherent part of that life. Traditionally, a Christian has an obligation to live; when he asserts himself against that obligation, he “abdicates his participation in God’s creative love.”

Traditionally, a Christian has an obligation to live. When he asserts himself against that obligation, he abdicates his participation in God’s creative love.
An impulse in modern theology is to forsake the notion that what is significant is not what an individual does with his life, but what God does through it.

simply tradition, and at least one modern theologian has strongly criticized the perception of life as a gift. An emerging impulse in modern theology is to affirm the individual’s right to self-determination and avoidance of suffering, forsaking the fundamental notion that what is significant is not what the individual does with his life, but what God does through it. In this respect the concept of wrongful life, making a radical departure from traditional law, patterns the radical departure in modern theology.

If the concept seems incompatible with both our legal heritage and our religious heritage, each of which contributes to our communal sense of justice, then we might say it offends the “public policy.” An amorphous concept, public policy has never been fully defined; it is, however, an important consideration often cited by courts as reason enough to deny a new cause of action. While courts are not legislatures in the sense of producing popularly mandated laws, they are nonetheless part of a democratic society and act to some extent in accordance with the public conscience. Not surprisingly, the courts of some states which have rejected claims of wrongful life have pointed to public policy as dictating such rejection.

One expression of a public policy favoring life over non-existence was the now-antiquated criminalizing of abortion, and early wrongful life cases held that because abortion was illegal, courts could not sanction lawsuits in contravention of that law. New Jersey used this rationale to deny wrongful life; but following the United States Supreme Court’s decision in Roe v. Wade, a New York court seized upon the change in abortion law to justify approving such a lawsuit. That holding was finally reversed by New York's highest tribunal. Any argument that relaxed abortion control commands recognition of wrongful life is specious, for the Supreme Court case concentrates on the rights of the mother and interests of the state, ignoring the interests of the fetus. Roe v. Wade cannot be construed to protect a child's “fundamental right to be born as a whole, functional human being” as the proponents of wrongful life suggest.

The urge of such a “right” in the unborn child is disturbing for a number of reasons. First, because the child's genes make it impossible for him to be born healthy, the proposed right is not really to be born whole, but rather, not to be born. Further, as lawyers know, wherever there is a “right” there is a correlative “duty.” Thus, if a child has a right not to be born, someone has a duty to see that he is not conceived or, if conceived, to see that he is aborted. Who has this duty? Is it limited to the genetic counselor, or do prospective parents also share the duty? The physician's advice is obviously ineffectual if the parents do not act on it. And is the duty owed to every potential child? Should the law decree that every unborn child would rather not be born than endure an imperfect existence? One court surmised that if the child could have a say in the matter prior to birth, he would prefer life: “he would almost surely choose life with defects ... . A child need not be perfect to have a worthwhile life.” “It is basic to the human condition,” stated the court, “to seek life and hold on to it however heavily burdened.” Clearly, to impute to every potentially handicapped child a desire not to be born is to make an enormous and perilous assumption.

The Law and Lives not Worth Living

That assumption occasions the unsettling question of what kind or degree of infirmity will trigger the alleged desire not to be born and, consequently, the duty to prevent such birth. The child-plaintiff in the New Jersey case suffered impairments in sight, hearing, and speech, but he was not in constant physical pain. Other suits have entailed more substantial disabilities. One New York case concerned a retarded, brain-damaged child afflicted with Down's Syndrome, commonly known as Mongolism; another case in that state involved a child with polycystic kidney disease. In Alabama’s case, a girl was born with serious deformities; in Pennsylvania, the affliction was a disorder of the nervous system, neurofibromatosis. It is apparent that the greater the child's suffering, the greater will be the emotional pressure on the courts to grant recompense. Yet an underlying truth is that all lives are imperfect to some degree. Recognition of the wrongful life cause of action therefore places the legal system in the awkward position of having to identify those lives which are worth living and those which are not.

It is universally conceded that the one positive effect of allowing a suit for wrongful life is the creation of deterrence against negligent doctors' conduct. In reality, it would create added deterrence, as in most cases a “wrongful birth” suit will already be available. The desire for deterrence flows not from the duty owed to the child, but from the duty owed to the parents; that duty is to give accurate information so that a reasoned decision will result. Calling the child a beneficiary of the contract between parent and doctor merely begs the question, for it presupposes that the child would concur in the parental decision to avoid birth.

Besides that fallacy, there is yet another problem with

the imposition of wrongful life liability simply to achieve deterrence. This problem was implicit in one case where the physician determined the odds were one in five that the baby would be born with deficiencies as the result of the mother's having had rubella. He counseled against abortion, believing it wrong to kill potentially four normal children in order to eliminate one impaired child. The child born was defective, but in the course of dismissing the claim, the court managed to evade the issue of the physician's ethical dilemma. A judge in a later case recalled it, giving an alarming prophecy: confronted with wrongful life liability, he said, physicians will be inclined to practice "defensive medicine," advising abortion often to avoid the risk of incurring a lawsuit. Our legal system frequently authorizes liability to achieve deterrence, often with success; when deterrence so alters behavior, though, its wisdom is questionable. Wrongful life liability may silently work a dramatic social change on the American family, as well as on the physician who participates in its engenderment.

**The Lost Question on the Way to Court**

Impact on the family is especially possible since there is nothing to suggest that the burgeoning wrongful life concept will be restricted to situations where the child-plaintiff is physically or mentally infirm. One of the most celebrated cases was brought by an illegitimate child who sued his father for allowing him to be born with that stigma. Illinois refused the suit; New York rejected a similar one in which the child sued the state, blaming it for her conception, the result of a rape while her mother was confined in a state mental hospital. Extended to mothers, this type of lawsuit could convert the right to have an abortion into the duty to have one. Seemingly anticipating the future ramifications, New York declared that "being born under one set of circumstances rather than another is not a suable wrong."

The ultimate question, therefore, is what does constitute a "wrong" for which the law should grant a remedy. Proponents of wrongful life insist that the claim they espouse is for "conscious pain and suffering." Cast in terms of "wrongful life," however, the claim is plainly one against an individual's very existence: he cannot experience injury independently of existence. Having witnessed the juristic extensions which finally produced the result in California, the legal profession is now equipped with a vehicle for litigation that condemns what much of the public holds sacred. How this happened jurisprudentially is clear: wrongful life looked like wrongful birth, which looked like countless claims for expenses incurred because of someone's negligence. Yet anyone can see that wrongful life is immensely different from an ordinary case of negligence. If something seems amiss, lawyers should retrace their steps. Perhaps the question that was lost in the race to the courthouse was, "Can life ever be a wrong?"

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**I Am Free**

I am this water in your cupped hands:  
I dare you to drink!  
The taste is sometimes brackish  
— the river lazily through lowlands  
lapped mud, the sourness  
of decaying plants.

Daughter of the river-god  
I emerged upstream  
cold, dripping  
to flow into your naked hands.

Can you hold me?  
And if you bring me  
tame into your house  
a water-wife  
for your bed and board  
be careful: do not surround me  
with bolted doors;  
do not buy your daily draught  
with golden combs, with silks!

Poured into your life, I will rest  
quiet within your silence  
glistening like a fish  
between your palms.

The thirst I feed  
is not of seeking flesh:  
Deeper, I flow deeper than the skin  
leave other traces than water-prints  
over the surface of your days.

I speak of brightness  
I am the mother-shine of the first spring.  
If you drink  
when you drink  
be careful, remember:  
I am free!

_Catherine de Vinck_

**For a Lover Unseen**

Clay to the potter  
granite to the stone-cutter  
ivory to the carver:  
I take words, intractable, uncoiling  
— each one a compact substance  
of high intensity and voltage—  
to be fired, fused by precise  
formed into ornaments of gold  
to hang in upper rooms  
on walls fragile as egg-shells.

For you, because I know  
the bright distance of your eyes  
I weave words into a silken shirt  
of one color, and seamless.

_Catherine de Vinck_
Christian Higher Education at the Crossroads

Part I: The Present Situation in Historical Perspective

Robert V. Schnabel

The purposes of these essays are:
(1) to examine the current status of Christian higher education in historical perspective,
(2) to set forth some theological and philosophical bases for Christian higher education,
(3) to explore the "idea" or "nature" of the institution of higher education, and finally
(4) to offer directions for the mission of the Lutheran institution of higher education.

There is little doubt that schools, colleges, and universities enjoy less public favor today than they once did. Despite increased dollars appropriated by governments to state institutions, increased voluntary support of private institutions by alumni, friends, and corporations, and enlarged state and federal financial aid allocations to students attending institutions in both sectors, the level of support of public and private higher education has declined relative to economic inflation. Institutions of higher education face a host of problems as they enter the 1980s and look ahead to the 1990s. In addition to economic problems associated with inflation (or stagflation or recession or depression), and a cost-income squeeze abetted by soaring energy prices and the cost of compliance with federal regulations, they must cope with a decline in the birthrate, begun in the early 1960s, that assures some degree of enrollment contraction in the last two decades of this century.

High school graduation rates have leveled in recent years and show no sign of increasing. College attendance rates of high school graduates peaked ten years ago. Higher education enrollments have shown gains only because increased attendance rates of white females, minority group members, and adults have offset actual declines in attendance rates of white males. The notion that a decline in future college attendance by 18-to-24 years olds can be offset by increases in adult enrollees who wish to complete interrupted degree programs or to pursue in-service training, continuing education, or life-long learning overlooks the fact that it takes four or five part-time adult students to replace one full-time eighteen-year-old student.

The key fact is that there will be a one to two per cent dropoff each year, beginning in 1981 or 1982, in the number of American eighteen year olds entering institutions of higher education. By 1994 there will be 15 to 20 per cent fewer 18-to-24 year old young adults, the traditional college-going group, than in the peak year of 1979. This means a decline of at least 1,500,000 traditional college and university students by 1994, with no turn-around projected until the end of the twentieth century. A reduction of 1,500,000 college-age students is the equivalent of 1500 institutions with enrollments of 1000, or of 1000 institutions with enrollments of 1500! Of course population and enrollment declines will not be distributed equally throughout the United States. By 1994, the thirteen "frostbelt" states in the northeastern, eastern, and upper midwestern quadrant, where about 50 per cent of the country's four-year colleges and universities are located, will suffer 30 to 45 per cent decreases in the number of projected high school graduates, while southern and western "sunbelt" states will experience more modest declines or even (in sparsely populated states) hold their own or increase slightly.

Learning to Cope with a Downward Slope

Many leaders and members of college and university faculties and administrations are unable to accept the bad news and start realistic planning. Disregarding the fact that 77 higher education institutions were closed or merged in the boom decade of the 1960s, and that 196 more institutions went out of existence in the 1970s (132 closings, 46 mergers, 18 shifting to public control), most colleges and universities are hoping that the enrollment decline ahead will affect other, not their own, institutions. Most institutions acknowledge that the competition for students will heat up markedly, but they regard this as a "market" problem which in large measure will be met by aggressive promotion and recruitment strategies so their institutions will escape the fate that will overtake others. Perhaps. More likely not.

The solution is not to be found by maintaining or increasing the student supply with "hyped up" recruitment tactics or even by offsetting declines in the "traditional" student market with pumped-up attendance of "non-traditional" (adult) students, but by finding ways to reduce institutional size while maintaining quality standards or to reduce the number of institutions com-

Robert V. Schnabel is Publisher of the Cresset and President of Valparaiso University. This article is his first in a series of four articles on the topic of Christian higher education which will be published in the Cresset during this academic year.

September, 1980
peting for the smaller student pool. Fred Crossland of the Ford Foundation, in two realistic and provocative papers—"Facing Up to Going Down" and "Learning to Cope with a Downward Slope"—has proposed a different alternative: not "survival of the fittest," but massive inter-institutional cooperation, far exceeding anything ever before achieved, so that institutions identify what each can do best, reduce pointless duplications and redundancies, share resources, and work together rather than fighting among themselves. Mr. Crossland believes that, among public institutions, state colleges (former teachers colleges) will be more vulnerable than state university systems and community colleges and, among private institutions, non-prestigious tuition-dependent colleges and universities will be more vulnerable than high-prestige colleges and universities and very small, highly specialized institutions (art schools, technical schools, seminaries).

Many colleges and universities, in addition to reaching out for "non-traditional" students—chiefly adults—are beginning the difficult planning process to develop alternatives and options for pro-active and orderly response: reduction in scale of operations and retrenchment in programs and services—through program review and modification, faculty retraining, staff reduction and redeployment, and consolidation and reallocation of resources—if such actions become necessary. Independent colleges and universities, especially in light of the gap in prices they must charge compared with prices of subsidized public institutions, are being urged to find ways to justify or overcome tuition differentials. Church-related institutions are seeking to regain the allegiance and support of disaffected or disinterested church constituencies by stressing their educational "distinctiveness" and their partnership role with affiliated church bodies. Both public and private colleges and universities are developing more aggressive student recruitment and financial resources development programs.

The purposes of this series of essays are (1) to examine the current status of Christian or church-related higher education in historical perspective;¹ (2) to set forth some theological and philosophical bases of Christian higher education, absent honest commitment to which by church-related institutions' faculties, administration, and students in such a way that they inform and give direction to the institution's mission, purposes, appointment and recruitment practices, and life, mere "market strategies" will have little effect in efforts to sustain the support of constituencies or to recapture lost constituencies; (3) to explore the "idea" or "nature" of the institution of higher education; and (4) to offer suggestions regarding the identity, mission, purposes, programs, character, and "partnership" relations with its church constituency appropriate to a Lutheran institution of higher education.

The Protestant College in the Past

Four-year colleges, largely the invention of American Protestant denominations, are based on Scottish and British prototypes accommodated to pioneer and frontier conditions. Until the end of the nineteenth century, religious beliefs and sectarian purposes were major forces in the establishment and maintenance of such colleges which, by today's standards, often were little more than secondary schools. The earliest institutions—Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, Princeton, Kings (Columbia), Brown, Dartmouth, Amherst, Williams, Bowdoin, and others—were created primarily to prepare an educated clergy taught primarily by clergymen, and secondarily to provide at least some educated lay leaders, to preserve a particular form of denominational belief, and to foster Christian moral values.

Ecclesiastical schisms and efforts of religious sects and ethnic groups to preserve their particular values, beliefs, traditions, and cultures also provided impetus for establishing their own schools, if adequate financial backing could be secured. The preservation of these schools depended on the continued religious, moral, and financial support of their sponsors. Few colleges in this early period were non-sectarian. Mergers of denominational colleges or coalitions among them were rare. It is estimated by Donald Tewksbury that, of some 850 Protestant colleges founded before 1865, only 145 were still in existence in 1929, and that of an additional 300 or more colleges founded after 1865, only 150 were still in existence in 1929.

A major factor in the gradual move toward non-sectarian higher education, when the support of sectarian sponsors waned or the creation of new colleges diverted resources, was economic. Another factor was the revolution brought about by adoption, in a number of "leading" colleges, of a new institutional form based on the German university model which placed stress on scholarship and research as primary institutional purposes and functions. Introduced at The Johns Hopkins University and Clark University in the late nineteenth

¹We wish not to enter the debate as to whether the proper term is "Christian" or "church-related" or "church-sponsored" higher education. The history, character and relationships of individual institutions to their churches have varied. institution by institution and church body by church body. Some are owned, operated, and controlled by their sponsoring churches. Others are "related" to the affiliated churches in various ways. Still others are independent and autonomous, enjoying stronger or weaker ties to an affiliated church constituency, denomination or denominational judiciary, or religious community.
After all, there is no such thing as Presbyterian physics, Methodist mathematics, Baptist biology, Catholic chemistry, Episcopal engineering, or Lutheran logic.

century, this model was later adopted or emulated by many private and public institutions.

As faculty members of denominational institutions increasingly were recruited from graduate schools and the academic profession rather than from the ranks of the clergy who did not have advanced preparation in academic disciplines and fields, and as "objective" research and scholarship became normative of the "best" in higher education practice, the importance of a denominational affiliation by a church-related institution and faculty religious commitment and subscription to creedal or dogmatic standards became progressively less significant. As a result of the Morrill Act of 1862, moreover, by which land-grant institutions of agriculture and mechanics were established, with special concern for technical studies, applied sciences, and extension services, another new model was introduced into American higher education based on public, non-sectarian foundations. From these developments the twentieth-century view of an institution of higher education as committed to scholarship, research, applied science, and service, in addition to teaching, emerged and continues as the dominant mode today.

The Secularization of the University

As a result, or as part, of these developments, religious elements in the form and content of independent and church-sponsored higher education subsequently were limited to a few required religion courses, required attendance at chapel exercises (the number of days per week varied), and reliance on at least some faculty members and out-of-class activities for Christian influence. The denominational college became progressively less closely tied to a parent church body and survived largely as a result of such factors as ethnic and cultural traditions, social class, and geographical location. Fewer and fewer "respectable" colleges and universities would base their claim to academic quality and attractiveness to students on any ground other than that of academic and professional "excellence." After all, there is no such thing as Presbyterian physics, Methodist mathematics, Baptist biology, Catholic chemistry, Episcopal engineering, or Lutheran logic. Programs of church colleges were justified by their being equal to or better than those offered at independent institutions (those that had severed formal ties and retained only a historic connection with parent churches) and at "good" public institutions.

As the twentieth century unfolded, especially after World War II, a flood of new students had to be accommodated. To provide buildings, facilities, and equipment to accommodate expanded student bodies and to meet requirements of accrediting bodies—the sine qua non of acceptability and the minimal indicator of institutional strength—many institutions, both Protestant and Catholic, modified their religious and denominational character (whether by further reducing or eliminating required religion courses or by reducing the number of chapel exercises and making attendance wholly voluntary) in order to be eligible for federal and state funds. In many cases boards of trustees were "laicized," with a certain proportion of the members lacking ties to the affiliated church body. The laicization of governing boards was done not so much for theological reasons (for example, the Christian teaching of "the universal priesthood of all believers") as for anticipated economic and political benefits affluent and influential board members might provide.

Faculties and administrations, too, were academicized and professionalized: appointments were made increasingly on the basis of strictly academic and professional criteria, such as advanced degrees, scholarly and research productivity or potential, and professional experience. Student recruitment became progressively "scholasticized": "good" colleges and universities sought to recruit and enroll "good" students, that is, students with strong academic records as measured by high school grades and class rank and scores on standardized college-admissions tests. Religious commitment and orthodoxy generally was regarded as of relatively minor significance in the appointment of faculty and the admission and retention of students; religious matters were viewed as basically private concerns.

There was a reciprocal effect with respect to relationships of church colleges and their denominational affiliates. Denominations tended to lose vital interest in their educational institutions—not merely church bodies themselves but also their individual members, who had become Americanized and who also used academic, professional, and economic criteria when selecting a college or university for their sons and daughters. Indeed, most parents no longer had (or now have) a dominant, or even strong, influence on their sons and daughters in the selection of a college or university. Parents and children alike looked for an institution that, for a variety of reasons, was most "suitable" without regard to whether it was church-related or not. Less than five per cent (significantly less in some denominations) of high school graduates who are members of a Protestant or Catholic congregation and who go on to a college or university choose to attend one of their denomination's institutions. Denominations, in turn, reduced or eliminated direct financial support of their colleges and universities. The proportion of annual operating funds church-related institutions receive directly from affil-
Most colleges agree that the competition for students is heating up, but many regard it as a "market problem" which will overtake other colleges. Perhaps. More likely not.

iated church bodies today is rarely as high as five per cent and often is less than one per cent. Only a modest number of additional students or additional gifts from alumni, corporations, or foundations is needed to replace lost church body subsidies.

Thus the gradual de-sectarianizing and secularizing of Protestant and Catholic higher education—in faculty, administration, students, programs, and denomination ties—has been accelerated by the realities of academic and social change and the market place. As church body subsidies declined, both in absolute dollars and especially relative to the inflationary economy, church-related institutions have become increasingly dependent for operating, capital and (in some institutions) endowment funds on student tuition and fee income, special government financial aid to students, direct government institutional grants, and gifts from foundations, corporations, alumni, and friends.

Economic realities also intensified the need to broaden an institution's attractiveness to a wider range of students, donors, and the local or area community simply to survive or, better, to expand in size and "improve" in quality. This, in turn, accelerated the movement towards more independent status and to reliance on the achievement of competitive educational quality as measured largely by academic and professional standards of excellence. The need to prepare students to meet the demands of the business and professional communities for competent personnel, moreover, also accelerated the placement of academic and professional values in the foreground. Faculty members, who in considerable measure have accepted the graduate or post-baccalaureate professional school model as normative, have assumed control not only of public colleges and universities but also of many independent and church-related institutions.

Until 1940, independent (church-related and private) institutions of higher education held their own in relation to the growing system of non-denominational, nonsectarian, state-operated, tax-supported institutions in the proportion of students being served. In 1949, independent institutions accounted for 50 per cent of higher education enrollment in the United States—a decline of only twelve per cent from 1900. By 1976, independent institutions accounted for only 23 per cent of the total postsecondary enrollment and today they enroll about 21 per cent. Reliable projections indicate that within 20 years the independent sector (including both private and church-related institutions) will enroll but 15 per cent, at best, of the diminishing pool of students. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that independent institutions, just to keep pace academically in the competition to attract "good" students, have been forced to raise tuition and other fees to the point where they are in danger of pricing themselves out of their traditional student market. The gap in average tuition charges between public and independent institutions is now well over $2,000 per year (room and board charges at institutions in both sectors are roughly the same). This means that to meet the financial needs of students and their families, independent institutions must allocate a very sizeable proportion of their current funds for scholarships and need-based educational grants, a large proportion of which are unfunded (that is are actually tuition discounts). This method of providing student financial aid, in turn, weakens the financial condition of independent institutions by leaving less money for salaries, equipment, supplies, and other fixed (and escalating) operating costs.

**Americanized Values in a Values Market**

Another source of difficulty is the high cost of compliance to meet federal regulations—ERISA, OSHA, EOE, OCR, Title IX, increases in social security and minimum wage levels, and the like. Independent institutions must appeal to something other than excellence of facilities, breadth and depth of programs, and qualifications of faculty, since on these grounds many public institutions are their equals or superiors. If the newer community colleges, state universities that formerly were teachers colleges, and regional campuses of major state universities are no more "excellent" than many independent and church-related institutions, the plain fact is that they are becoming more attractive to students and their families—including members of Christian denominations and congregations—because as state-operated, tax-supported institutions they are considerably less expensive, are located geographically within easy reach, and (given the Americanized values of church families and the perhaps understandable but undeniable diminution of the Christian character of many church-related institutions) are viewed as little different from denominational colleges and universities.

One strategy smaller church-related institutions have adopted to be more "competitive" with larger, well-endowed private institutions and amply-supported large public institutions is to establish cooperative arrangements ("consortia") with counterpart colleges. Another strategy is to try to make a virtue of their relatively small size and limitations by stressing their more intimate scale, communal character, individualized service (including personal and academic counseling), and personal concern for students, even though it is by no means evident that such values are realized simply by an institution being relatively small. Another strategy
is to stress the fact that church institutions are concerned with value issues and value inquiry, and thus help students deal with their concerns about “meaning” and “purpose” in life. Virtually all independent institutions (both private and church-related) point to their potential for educational distinctiveness, flexibility, and innovation, the benefits of institutional “diversity” and “pluralism,” and the value of student “freedom of choice.”

**The Sacred Commitment for Renewal**

The National Congress on Church-Related Higher Education, a gathering of leaders and representatives of 24 denominations and church groups and their educational institutions, convened at the University of Notre Dame in June, 1979, and at Washington, D.C., in February, 1980, to deal with the future of colleges and universities.² Six study commissions prepared background papers for both sessions. Hundreds of representatives attended. The National Congress published a volume, *Affirmations: A Sacred Commitment for Creative Renewal*, dealing with the vital partnership of church and college. Included in this publication are summaries of group meetings, several addresses, a detailed inventory of items church-related colleges and college-related churches may utilize to probe their partnership status and stimulate renewal of such relationships, and eight “affirmations for renewal.” The following summarizes these affirmations.³

1. The Christian religion provides the motivation and vision for the mission and purposes of church-related colleges and universities. Belief in the love and sovereignty of God and in the relevance of God’s action in Jesus Christ to the whole of life is central to this faith. This faith involves an alternative point of view for the interpretation of knowledge, different from much of secular higher education. Church-related colleges and universities present opportunities for persons and communities to pursue higher education in institutions informed by these religious principles.

2. The Christian perspective of church-related colleges and universities enriches and informs the goals of the institution. Although they share with public colleges and universities a commitment to develop intellectual and analytic abilities, to discover truth and communicate it, and to advance the welfare of society, church-related institutions also seek to nurture the spiritual values of individuals, to explore the relation of faith and reason, to express to the broader society the prophetic witness of the church, and to encourage the discovery, personal integration, and celebration of life’s meaning in all its dimensions through educational programs with a distinctive Christian perspective.

3. The distinctive Christian orientation of church-related institutions should enrich their educational programs through primary focus on commitment, value issues, value inquiry, and exposure to teachings and commitments of the Christian church. They stress effective ways of developing values and personal meaning in one’s life, study of the Christian tradition, and providing environments where spiritual growth, service, and Christian Vocation can be nurtured. Valuable in themselves, these accents also enhance the valid secular aspects of higher education, such as development of intellect and acquisition of knowledge and understanding.

4. Church-related colleges and universities have made and are making distinctive educational and spiritual contributions to higher education and to society, and will continue through reaffirmation of their purposes and through renewal to make needed contributions in new times.

5. Church-related colleges and universities have great diversity among themselves but also are distinct from public institutions of higher education. They are an important source of strength for higher education and society as a whole. Diversity is good and desirable, providing a choice of institutions and approaches for students and faculty in their pursuit of truth. They provide a notable balance and an educational alternative to state-supported higher education.

6. The public interest will be served better when public policies provide a supportive environment for the continuing strength and contribution of church-related colleges and universities without undue regulation. For these institutions have led in extending educational opportunities to economically, educationally, and culturally disadvantaged persons and in the struggle for justice. They are often sources of experimentation and innovation. They are in the best interest of society. Public policy should recognize and provide for their contributions.

7. Churches and their institutions of higher education should mutually benefit from a vital, interdependent relationship and partnership. The church relationship helps the educational institution in applying the insights of faith and of the Christian heritage to knowledge and to the issues of the day. The college relationship of the church helps the church in its continuing quest to discover truth and knowledge and in providing intellectual environments where the faith can be developed and tested, the moral implications of new knowledge and technology evaluated, and students can be prepared to contribute later to the work of the church.

8. Churches and their institutions of higher education will interpret and supplement these affirmations in light of their own traditions and thus make their own affirmations for renewal.

Long before the National Congress sessions, church-related institutions had stressed their capability for innovation, their commitment to some form of religious instruction and life, their communal and caring character, and the opportunity they offer for diversity, pluralism, and freedom of choice for students in American higher education. To the extent that faculty and students at these institutions have appropriated and inter-

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² The following denominations and church groups were represented: African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., American Lutheran Church, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, Christian Church, Christian College Coalition, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Church of the Brethren, Church of Christ, Church of God, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Church of the Nazarene, Episcopal Church, Free Methodist Church of N.A., Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Mennonite Church, Presbyterian Church U.S., Religious Society of Friends, Southern Baptist Convention, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, and United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

nalized professionalized and secularized norms of excellence and where the idea of a college or university as not only an intellectual and pre-professional community but also as a moral and spiritual community is regarded as irrelevant or out of date, it is difficult to give substance to the hopes and desires that underlie such claims and “commitments.”

Rhetoric about providing economically realistic options to students to attend church-related and private institutions is not given substance, in the face of economically disparities between public and non-public institutions and the gap in tuition and pricing, unless public policy enables state and federal governments to provide needed financial aid to students or concerned private donors and church bodies do so. Government eligibility and accountability requirements, including compliance regulations, pose serious questions of Constitutional limitations and raise concerns about church-state entanglements and government intrusion on the autonomy, privateness, and conscience of independent and church-related institutions and the threat of their becoming dependent upon government. An institution’s decision-making may be affected, for example, when it becomes economically necessary, in order to retain government financial support, to compromise the institution’s basic identity, mission, goals, and character. Not only cost-benefit, but also mission-compromising, analysis is called for.

The Citadel of Faith and Learning

The future of independent and church-related higher education is unclear. Christian higher education—under whatever aegis—is at a crossroads. Given the norms of “excellence” which are the dominant values of the academy; given the denominational, ethnic, social, economic, and geographical factors noted earlier, and given the many other “challenges” which all institutions of higher education face, the survival—let alone survival “with distinction”—of many independent and church-related institutions of higher education is threatened. If some denominations and/or their congregations and members, alumni and friends, believe strongly in such institutions and vigorously support those that have clear, unequivocal purposes and programs rooted in the Gospel and the Christian ethos, grounded in integral theological studies and religious activities and practices, a goodly number will not only “survive” but also succeed in achieving not merely “distinctive” but also “distinguished” character.

Independent Christian and church-related institutions that do not do so, in all likelihood, will recapitu-late the history of virtually all Protestant (and some Catholic) elementary and secondary schools. Protestant elementary schools, the dominant form of schooling in the colonial and early national periods, were replaced in time (ca. 1830-1880) by non-sectarian, tax-supported schools whose existence was predicated on a tacit “Protestant consensus” within their local communities. Protestant academies (the earliest secondary schools) were supplanted for the most part (ca. 1870-1920) by non-sectarian, tax-supported secondary schools. The decline and revival of church-sponsored “private” (parochial) elementary and secondary (Catholic and Protestant) schools in recent years is evidence that the concern of congregations and church families for an education for their children that is qualitatively strong and spiritually moored is not dead in America.

It would be foolhardy, however, to ignore the “march of events” that swept aside much of church-sponsored elementary and secondary education in the nineteenth century and the first half (or more) of the twentieth century. It would be naive to assume that “it can’t happen” to church-related and Christian institutions of higher education in our time or in the early twenty-first century. It need not happen and will not occur where a church-related or Christian institution, because of its distinguished character as an institution of authentic educational quality and excellence, is maintained and strengthened and its distinctive role as a “citadel of faith and learning” prevails. Such institutions will be able to muster the religious, moral, and financial interest of their constituencies to support their missions, remain economically sound, keep student fees within reach of those who wish to attend them, faculty compensation at representative levels, and institutional resources adequate to meet their needs and opportunities.

This will not take place as a result of nostalgia or by “doing business as usual” or through wishful thinking. Dependent on the grace of God, the Lord of history, it will require institutional policies and practices that are based on a pervasive commitment to Christian theological beliefs, a clearly articulated and practiced philosophy of Christian higher education, a shared understanding of and subscription to the nature of authentic higher education by the campus community (faculty, administration, student body, and governing board) and its constituencies, and (in the case of Christians who are part of the Lutheran “confessing movement” within catholic Christendom and are faithful to their educational as well as theological heritage) an incisive understanding of and vigorous commitment to the “idea” or “nature” of the Lutheran university or college. To these matters we shall turn in subsequent articles of this series.
As far as we can tell the first people to make pottery in the Near East did so somewhere around 8500 years ago. This period is called the Neolithic age and, in contrast to an Alley Oop or Fred Flintstone image, human beings during this period were doing impressive things culturally and architecturally. They had already long ago solved the problem of food supply, having discovered how to cultivate crops and to domesticate animals for stockbreeding. Developments of this sort were bound to revolutionize daily life patterns, making it increasingly possible for some of the population to spend time on matters other than subsistence. Thus some became employed at administering the complexities of social life, while others attended to the religious rituals, and still others were involved in architectural planning and building or in producing artistic items.

Among the cultures of the ancient Near East the emergence of pottery appears as one of the crafts which became possible in a society that allowed some of its people enough time to be creative. What was it that led to the first experiments of this type? At Jericho the late Kathleen Kenyon noted that some of the latest pre-pottery people had begun to use clay in a variety of ways—in making up floors, or for plastering the skulls of the dead so that the latter, as it were, might continue among the living community. There were also experiments at imitating containers and vessels which were part of daily

Common type of tomb chamber at Bab edh-Dhra, dating around 3200 B.C., with human bone pile in center and crania on left. Symmetrical juglet above right corner of this page came from tomb of this type as did the bowl with two clusters of raised dots on the front cover and the two Red Sea mollusk shell bracelets on the inside cover.
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Section drawing of a shaft leading to Tomb A 78 at Bab edh-Dhra, excavated in 1977. Shafts were usually cylindrical and about seven feet deep with doorways leading to small chambers. Plan of four chambers cut from one shaft is found below.
ing the course of the past seventeen years he has been to the area a dozen times. Along with many private contributions, the expedition has been funded by a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and during the 1979 season also received the support of the Committee for Research and Exploration of the National Geographic Society.

Handmade juglets with strap handles.

life. Some early pottery suggests the shape of gourds or baskets. So the appearance of pottery seems to have grown up naturally as an artistic response to the primary requirements of daily living.

Over the years the art was perfected by novel techniques and inventions, but the basic processes tended to be the same. In fact one of the remarkable facts is that present-day ceramists continue what ancient people, with less sophisticated equipment, did in producing a group of vessels for personal use, or for barter or trade. The starting point was the identification of a good clay source, and so the search for clay beds involved individual craftsmen and no doubt the potter’s family members. Once acquired, clays were rinsed and then tempered with non-plastic grits, grog (ground-up pottery), or tiny pieces of straw to prevent cracking when they hardened. A fascinating aspect of archaeological survey consists of searching for the ancient clay beds.

The throwing process challenged the talents of the earliest potters. Until approximately 3000 B.C. most pottery technically was not thrown but was rather formed by the method of coiling, which consisted of laying coils of clay over one another. Crude tools such as paddles were also used, and at first some pots were made on matting, the impression of which can still be seen on the bases of early pottery. Then came the tournette, at about 3000 B.C., a small invention which allowed for turning the vessel during its construction. The full-fledged wheel, in which a socket and disc were employed, and which was turned by foot, followed not long thereafter. This freed the hands to attend to the delicacies of form and finishing.

Baking the vessels opened another area of experimentation and development. Some of the earliest craftsman simply depended on the sun to bake their clay vessels, and if the clays and temper were adequate, the natural baking process was most effective. It was not long, however, before the advantages of firing pottery in an artificial fire were seen. At first potters made simple, open fires—perhaps in pits cut into the ground—with the fuel consisting of branches and small timber sufficient to produce adequate heat for firing. This led to the further invention, again probably at around 3000 B.C., of the enclosed kiln, which by sealing the heat could produce a fire of
between 700-900 degrees C (1500-1900 degrees F), resulting in a higher quality vessel.

Decoration was a further aspect with which the ancient potters were concerned. Only a dull craftsman or consumer would be satisfied with a functional object lacking beauty to stimulate the senses. Even the simplest ancient vessels still frequently evidence the artistic feel with which they were produced. Methods of decoration consisted of covering the vessel with a liquid material made of water-impregnated clay, called a slip. Paints made from different substances, usually red, black or white in color could be used. Burnishing or rubbing the vessel with a bone or stone, after it had turned leather hard, produced a pleasant sheen on the surface. Polishing went even farther and gave a glistening effect over the entire vessel. Certain parts of a vessel could be exaggerated, such as a handle made in the form of an animal, or knobs suggestive perhaps of the breasts of the female. Incisions were sometimes made at appropriate points, and dots were stippled with the end of a reed. The lip of a jug could be bent not only for easier pouring but also to give a decorative result.

Even if in the ancient world the number and type of pottery forms were limited according to the traditions of the period, there were ways in which the forms could image the individuality of the potter, although the invention of the wheel had the effect of producing greater uniformity. There was, in any case, an interesting interplay of tradition and
Handmade bowl with bevelled rim; wiping lines near rim.

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Professor Robert H. Johnston, Dean of Fine Arts at Rochester Institute of Technology, and Professor R. Thomas Schaub, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, who are doing specialized studies of the pottery. The photograph of the tomb interior is by Kjell Sandved, Smithsonian Institution. The drawing of the section and plan of the tomb is by Becky Unland Vage, a former Valparaiso University student now studying at Trinity Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. The line drawings of the pottery throughout are by Jennifer Loynd, Rochester, New York. The layout is by Professor Richard H. W. Brauer, Director of the University Art Galleries and Collections at Valparaiso University. All other photographs are by Richard Brauer and Jack Hiller.

innovation. No potter would walk far out of line from the accepted repertory of his times, probably because he would have few customers who would tolerate eccentric objects. Yet there are evidences on individual examples of how the personality of the potter manifested itself on his tradition-oriented work. One side effect of the tenacity of tradition is that pottery forms are a helpful chronological indicator for archaeologists, since specific pottery types are datable to particular periods. This principle holds true in almost every area of the world, and it is the basis for the dating of vessels displayed in museums throughout the world today.

Through the generosity of the government of Jordan the Art Collection of Valparaiso University has come into possession of a collection of vessels from Bab edh-Dhra, near the Dead Sea, dating to the beginning of the Early Bronze Age at about 3200 B.C. By this time pottery making was an old and well-developed craft. Those who produced the pottery of this period had perhaps inherited the ability and received training from their predecessors, since a craft of this kind would tend to be preserved in specific families or sub-groups of a clan or tribe.

A number of things strike us as we look at this pottery. The first is that it is all handmade. This is significant because, as has been noted, at approximately 3000 B.C. we are at the end of the period in which handmade pottery predominates. Soon the construction techniques used here will be supplanted by the refined techniques of wheelmaking and kiln-firing. If one places one's fingers on the inside of the jugs in this group, the small, smoothed ridges which are left-overs of the process of coiling the walls can be felt. On the exterior, on the other hand, evidence of coiling is mostly absent, since the potter has shaved down the exterior. Interestingly, too, the vertical necks of jugs were made separately and were then attached to the body, the join of these two independent sections being visible under the inside of the neck.

The most apparent feature of the handmade character of the group is that not one vessel is exactly like another, even though the forms are traditional. Every vessel bears the stamp of an individual creation. Although the whole group conceivably was made at one time, the marks of mass production are entirely absent.

A second item is the decorative technique. Many of the vessels were covered with a red slip, and after this had dried, the potter used a burnishing tool to make the sheen which usually appears as shimmering vertical lines. Also popular among the decorative techniques were incisions or dots, achieved by stabbing with the end of a reed around the neck of a jug, the sides of a jar, or the upper wall of a bowl. The latter technique places the pottery in this collection in a long tradition, since potters from the Neolithic period onward had used incision, reed-tip impressions, fingernail crescents, and thumb impressions on applied bands of clay. This would suggest again that the pottery is at the end of a long development beginning several thousands of years earlier. Just as the Neolithic age itself was a revolutionary period, so also shortly after 3000 B.C. Palestine would see the emergence of great walled cities corresponding to the flourishing civilizations of Egypt during the time of the pyramids and the great kingdom of Sumer in Mesopotamia. The new pottery would reflect this cultural efflorescence, with its sophisticated manipulation of the potter's wheel, the kiln, and new ways of doing exterior decoration.

A final feature to note is how traditional this pottery is. There is not a great deal of variety in discrete forms. Yet, as we have noted, each vessel has its personality. The limitation of the group suggests a social situation rooted in traditional forms of expression. This is an interesting fact since the pottery in this group was produced by people who can be termed pastoralists, and who made their living through following their herds. Their craftsmen produced the pottery not so much for usage in daily life as to place in the tombs of the dead, though there is evidence from some of their camping areas that the forms of the tomb vessels imitated those used in daily life. Since the people were pastoralists, their dead had usually first been buried in the ground at other sites farther away. When the clan returned periodically to this area they did so to rebury the deceased in what was apparently a sacred, tribal burial area. The pottery was made for this last and sad event, evoking many memories among those who laid the
Cup made from a block of basalt, with two raised punctate bands.

*September, 1980*
burials for the last time and who arranged the pottery with them.

As we look at this pottery and consider where it came from we can well imagine the scene. The tribe is encamped on the low hills just east of the Dead Sea. They are living in makeshift lean-tos, or perhaps in tents. In their specially made baskets, constructed of split reeds, are the bones of deceased members of their families or tribe, much as the great leader of Israel took the bones of Joseph with him when leaving Egypt (Ex. 13:19). Some of their clan had probably arrived earlier to prepare the carefully carved tombs in the soft lime deposits of the region. The potters, too, have been busily engaged. Laying out their fires, they had placed their delicate products in them, turning them occasionally but sometimes failing to allow a side of the vessel to be adequately fired, so that a blackened blotch can be seen on it even today. The families move close to the tombs. Some of their stronger members descend the narrow shafts to the entrance below, as baskets and vessels are handed down one by one. When all is finished, one or more large stones are placed before the entry, sealed with wet mud and lime. The pottery rests in the darkness of the tomb along with these human bones, and sometimes with a sandal or a staff, until the recent work of the expedition.

The opportunity to handle this ancient pottery and to study it is a unique one. It is one way in which a modern person may be put into touch with another type of people at a very different time of human history. It is planned that this pottery will be available for examination and study by students and faculty at Valparaiso, and by any persons who may wish to visit the campus to examine it more closely. Further groups of wheel-made pottery from the immediately following period in the very near future will also be housed as part of the University Art Collection, allowing those interested to examine the craft of pottery making during a period when many new and significant inventions were occurring, which were to leave an impact upon this skill for all its future development.
From
The
Chapel

Beginning
With the End

Richard John Neuhaus

Jesus announced the Kingdom of God, but what appeared was the Church. The disappointment was understandable. Nor should we get over the disappointment. The temptation is to confuse the Church with the Kingdom of God, when it is the precise purpose of the Church to intensify, never to relax, humanity’s longing for the Kingdom of God.

Yet we delude ourselves if we think our devotion to the Kingdom is too pure to be tainted by engagement with the Church, just as we delude ourselves if we think our devotion to the Church Universal should not be compromised by entanglement with the churches local.

It is not in the purity of our abstractions but in the particularity of our commitments that fidelity is tested and freedom embraced.

A commencement address is a curious thing. The speaker should possess a degree of formality, while leaving the excesses of pomp and circumstance to the organist. He or she should be witty but not glib, current but not trendy, edifying but not predictable, substantial but not stuffy, critical but not abrasive. Above all, it should be a memorable speech that sends jaded graduates on their way with high enthusiasm and a life-long gratitude to the school to which, in several respects, they owe so much. Commencement speakers almost always fall short of the expectation. I frankly confess I do not remember a single word from my own graduations. Indeed I do not remember who spoke. If, however, one is to have a commencement, presumably one must have a commencement speaker. What is a commencement without a commencement speaker, except a shorter commencement? Nonetheless, and no matter how formidable the obstacles, I am honored by your invitation.

Commencement evokes the language of adventure and new beginnings. But in this commencement address I will speak of endings. To put it another way, I will talk about commencement and causes. The causes that brought you to this day, the causes that claim you and the causes that you claim; but, most important, causes in the philosophical sense. You may remember from the touch of Thomism that I trust you received in the course of your education to date, that there are formal causes, material causes, and final causes. It is upon final causes that I would focus: Commencement for what and to what?

To speak of final causes is not to look backward so much as it is to look forward. It is in our conclusions that we find our commencements, in our ends that we know our beginnings, in our destinations that we discover our destinies.

The thought is not entirely original. The essential idea will perhaps be recognized from the opening question and answer in the Shorter Catechism of Westminster: “What is the chief end of man?” “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” That, I trust, is the final cause of your commencement. Or to put it in the words of Our Lord, it is to seek first the Kingdom of God. That appearingly simple command is the problematic that will, that should, preoccupy you the whole of your life, as it has preoccupied generations before us. Whether you are ordained or not, whatever your ministry will be, it will be in a Church that is far short of the Kingdom of God.

A nineteenth century historian observed that Jesus came announcing the Kingdom of God but what appeared was the Church. The disappointment was understandable. We have never gotten over the disappointment, nor
should we. The temptation is to confuse the Church with the Kingdom of God, when it is the precise purpose of the Church to intensify, never to relax, humanity's longing for that Kingdom. The final cause of our lives, as of the whole creation, is God's establishment of his rule over all things. The Church, the believing community, is the preview, the advance signal, the anticipation of that end. As we devote ourselves to this ambiguous community which yet carries the message of unambiguous triumph in the Beloved Community of human hope and divine promise, we will have lived in obedience to our final cause, our chief end, in obedience to the Kingdom.

The Conspiracy Against Finality

Thus the theme of commencement and finality. In his first novel (Almayer's Folly), Joseph Conrad wrote: "The fear of finality lurks in every human heart, preventing so many heroisms and so many crimes."

In today's culture—and to an alarming extent in today's Church—the fear of finality has produced a conspiracy against finality. Finality is equated with fanaticism. In order to avoid the crimes of finality, which in fact we have hardly avoided, we have sacrificed the heroisms of finality. But, if we are called at all, we are called to be heroes and heroines. God issues no calls to be ordinary. And those who we call the ordinary saints are, by virtue of being saints, by no means ordinary.

Finality is the form of our response to an authoritative word. Once it was said, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth." Today we say, "Speak Lord, we welcome your input." The scriptures urge us to press forward to the high calling to which we are called; the culturally approved style is not to press forward but to be laid back. We are laid back until we're finally laid out, thus missing even the sleaziest of goals, mere survival.

I have long been intrigued by the etymology of the word "decide." As you likely know, it comes from de plus caedere, to cut off. We speak of deciding for something, and that's right. But we have not decided significantly unless we've decided against everything that is not for what we've decided for. The early Christians were not martyred just for saying "Jesus is Lord." They were martyred because they said Jesus is Lord and therefore Caesar is not. Finality involves decision, cutting off. "Seek first the Kingdom of God" means not seeking something else first—or fifth, or tenth, or even at all.

Our culture is not on friendly terms with finality. In the kindergarten of contemporary culture, the big gold stars are given for being open, tentative, and provisional. We are "into" this and "into" that, but the ease of our exits and entrances betrays the fact that we are not really into anything. We are, as we say to the salesperson in the department store, just looking. Our culture hands out gold stars for being vulnerable, but without finality we are really vulnerable to nothing. Our work, our friendships, our marriages, are notable not for their commitments but for their escape clauses. Be it ordination or matrimony, "till death do us part" is rejected as the language of closure stifles our creativity and limits our options.

I want to argue that without an act of closure there can be no opening, no commencement. If we think we are beginning everything, we are really beginning nothing. It is one of the more fetching illusions of young people, although it is by no means limited to young people, that we can be and do everything there is to be and do. The five year old niece tells you she's going to be a stewardess and then maybe a scientist and then maybe President of the United States. You smile knowingly, knowing that choices will have to be made—or, less happily, that choices will be made for her. In the latter case, alternatives will be cut off, but without her real decision. This is tragically true in the lives of many. In retrospect they see what was cut off, but in a very profound sense they did not decide. They were not participants in their own lives. Their lives appear to them not as a process of decision in pursuit of destiny but as product of circumstance. To put it bluntly, their lives are not their own. In the fear of finality, in the absence of decision, responsibility is surrendered by default to fate.

This is the phenomenon addressed by some liberation theologies in terms of whether people are the subjects or the objects of historical change. Or, in the words of Pope Paul VI's encyclical, Populorum Progressio, the question is whether people are "the artisans of their own destinies." Liberation theologies typically exaggerate the economic and political as the definite factors in the shaping of a life. But whether one is among the manifestly poor of Guatemala or among the elegantly
The Scriptures urge us to press forward to the high calling to which we are called. The culturally approved style today is to be laid back, until we're finally laid out.

poor of suburban Washington, the crucial issue is the same. If in the fear of finality we refuse to decide about the final cause, the chief end, for which we live, then we are objects and not subjects. We are the victims and not the artisans of our time.

There can be no commencement without an act of closure. What John Henry Newman wrote about a good sermon applies also to a good life. "Definiteness is the life of preaching. A definite hearer, not the whole world; a definite topic, not the whole evangelical tradition; and a definite speaker. Nothing that is anonymous will preach." Definiteness means decisions. You are not living an anonymous "life in general" but most particularly your life, one life which will be forever and uniquely known by your name. According to the sweet escapisms of some Eastern cults and other quasi-religious formulas for psychic and erotic ecstasy, our individuality is absorbed and obliterated in the Great Oneness of the Cosmos. But in the tradition that speaks, metaphorically to be sure, of names being written into the book of life, we are forever vulnerable to the particularity of the life shaped by the decisions we made or refused to make.

The Particularity of Commitment

Finality and particularity. Not to do everything but to do this thing well. Not to love everybody but to hold ourselves accountable to this person, to these people, for better and for worse. Fleeing from the particular, we find safety in false universals. Our responsibilities to the idea called humankind are ever so much more amenable to our moods than our responsibilities to Jane or John or that troublesome church council. Without finality and particularity there can be no fidelity, and therefore no infidelity. We are not vulnerable to being accused of breaking promises, but neither are we in the running for the ultimate reward of being found faithful. And, not being faithful, we will never be free.

I address these words especially to you who will be or have been ordained to the Church's ministry. I trust you will discover how difficult it is to be faithful and free. If you do not discover the difficulty, it can only be because you are not pursuing the goal. In ordination you make most particular vows to the Church, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. But you will likely find that you have most particular obligations to a local church, often divided, sinful, sectarian, and apathetic.

As there is a great gap between the Kingdom of God and the Church that is to proclaim the Kingdom, so there is a great gap between your idealization of the Church and the actuality of the community you are pledged to serve. Yet we delude ourselves if we think our devotion to the Kingdom is too pure to be tainted by engagement with the Church, just as we delude ourselves if we think our devotion to the Church Universal should not be compromised by entanglement with the churches local. It is not in the purity of our abstractions but in the particularity of our commitments that fidelity is tested and freedom embraced.

Do not count upon the church—whether it be the local congregation or national headquarters—to define your course of freedom and fidelity. In all the churches—Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic—the leadership is more familiar with flow charts than with freedom. Unless, day by day, you dare to decide, the particularity of your ministry will be swallowed up in the patterns of safety, and your colleagues will rise up to call you a success. Every day—in prayer, in searching the scriptures, in fear and trembling—you must return to that final cause, that chief end, and discover your mandate as if for the first time. And when the mandate seems unclear or even nonexistent, then act in the courage of your uncertainties, in radical reliance upon the promise of him whose call you once thought you heard.

Fidelity includes criticism. In order to be for the Church, it is frequently required to be against the Church, that the Church might more fully become itself. The Church seeks to justify itself, and will try to seduce you into justifying your ministry, by reference to something other than the final cause, the chief end. Then you must protest—for your sake, and for the Church's. When we lose faith we tell ourselves that the ministry is worthwhile because it makes people feel good, or it advances our version of social justice, or it meets some vaguely religious needs, or it serves some therapeutic purpose. These are the lies that keep us going when we no longer believe. In fact there is no measure of utility that can justify the extravagance of the claims of the Christian gospel. Our ministries stand or fall not by their utility but by the truth of the promise that all of history, and every life within history, is destined to be consummated in the Kingdom that was signalled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
That claim has not been vindicated in historical fact. The blind do not see and the lame do not walk, and in this dark age, this century of genocide, the tears have not been wiped from the eyes of our sisters and brothers, neither in Somalia, nor in Cambodia, nor in the cancer ward next door. There is much that contradicts the hope we proclaim. And we must readily admit that it is at least conceivable that our final cause is a false cause, that the Kingdom is not coming after all. Therein lies the final vulnerability of our ministries. We stake everything upon a promise that cannot be proved except by its fulfillment. The temptation is to hedge our bets, to soften this severe finality, to build our ministries and our lives upon a less extravagant claim.

**The Universe Opened Up to Hope**

Your ministry will be a success if you refuse, and help the Church to refuse, to settle for anything less than the Kingdom. The audacity of the vision will compel you at times to prophetic criticism of the Church and the world that refuse to recognize their destiny in the promised Kingdom. In prophecy faithfulness and freedom are interlocked. When you are most truly a prophet, you must be most truly a priest. It is one of the great graces of my life to have worked for several years with Martin Luther King, Jr. until his death. Dr. King frequently said what every wise parent, every wise teacher, every wise pastor should know, but what we often forget: “Whom you would change you must first love.” Only in the faithfulness of our love are we free to criticize. True prophecy is always an exercise of love, never of contempt. The prophet, ancient or modern, denounces our sin precisely because he perceives our destiny. Our failures are odious because they betray a dignity so glorious. In short, the prophet is first a priest, the community’s lover and companion, who has overcome the fear of finality by investing all he is and hopes to be in a people who, like himself, are the unlikely heirs of the promise.

You and I may not live to see that promise consummated in history. But it does not matter. Overcoming the fear of finality, we can now give ourselves boldly, even heroically, to that final cause, that chief end. It is the only cause, the only end, worthy of our lives, partial and provisional though they be. Perfect love, we are told, casts out fear. The fear of finality has been overcome, for all of us, one Friday afternoon on the garbage dump of history when the free and faithful One cried out, “It is finished.” With that act of closure toward death, the universe was opened to hope.

In that conclusion are all our commencements.

**Morning Praise**

I.

Let us awake in the serious beauty of dawn before the stars have melted into sun.
Let us awake and walk up the blue world into day, day long.
The sky is peachblow; half a moon is poised for promise.

II.

Swung for a dream on a pine bough, cradling there; then hurled, still heavy-alive with mystery unsleeping me.
Strange, to find this morning light not deep, not deep.

III.

There, hill-high against the peach and saffron of an empty sky, empty house, sun all the way through it.
Standing here, praying O for the sun to pierce me through.

*Kathleen Mullen*

**Child Writing**

The child holds her entire life: flowering childhood, burgeoning years, astonishing old age, in her pencil.

She dips the point into her tongue and writes— absolute poetry, timeless thirst, burning touch, final secret— I LOVE YOU.

*Sister Maura*
The Folly Theatre is a gem. Located in the National Register of Historic Places, it is Chicago's oldest legitimate theatre and on the Nankan Avenue, it is Chicago's oldest theatre. After transferring from a soldout run of performances at the Goodman Theatre, Lanford Wilson's Talley's Folly has completed the first performance of a month's engagement at the Studebaker. (The Studebaker Theatre is a gem. Located in the Fine Arts Building on South Michigan Avenue, it is Chicago's oldest legitimate theatre and on the National Register of Historic Places.)

Saturday, May 24. The pink and amber spotlights that bathed the lattice-work gazebo and the lush riverside foliage have dimmed. After transferring from a soldout run of performances at the Goodman Theatre, Lanford Wilson's Talley's Folly has completed the first performance of a month's engagement at the Studebaker. (The Studebaker Theatre is a gem. Located in the Fine Arts Building on South Michigan Avenue, it is Chicago's oldest legitimate theatre and on the National Register of Historic Places.)

John Steven Paul

Who Are You? Who Are We?

Two Questions Raised In Lanford Wilson's Talley's Folly

John Steven Paul

American drama is drama of character, perhaps because America is an aggregation of intriguing characters. It's list of former productions and performers reads like a history of the American theatre: the Province-town Players in O'Neill's The Hairy Ape, the Lunts in The Guardsmen, Ethel Barrymore in The Corn is Green, etc.)

Talley's Folly won the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for Lanford Wilson and is also his first Broadway success after a number of respectable failures. Perhaps his most famous play to date is The Hot l Baltimore which won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and appeared very briefly as a television series. The most common generic term applied to this new play by critics is Romantic Comedy. Mr. Wilson himself calls the play a "sweet romantic comedy." True: the play is dotted with funny lines and anchored in heart-felt speeches. In the end and after much resistance, the girl gives in to the boy's importunities and they pledge their troth under the silver light of the moon. A sweet romantic comedy.

The title of the play refers to the setting; Talley's folly is a folly of a man with a mild German accent doing in a place like Lebanon, Missouri. Constructed in ornate Victorian style, it is as out of place in the Ozarks as would be Victoria's Crystal Palace itself. Various specimens of river flora, the leaves of sheltering maples, and drooping willow branches nearly choke the docks, the boardwalk ramps, and the over-arching gazebo. ("He wanted to build a gazebo up by the house, but grandpa said it was a frivolity, so he built a boathouse. And made it look like a gazebo.") The building, erected in 1870, is rickety and faded by July 4, 1944, but in the shimmering moonlight, the setting is as romantic and rare as one of Tennessee Williams's pleasant dreams.

Within the curious confines of Talley's folly unfolds the love story of Sally Talley, a daughter of the Lebanon Talleys, and Matthew Friedman, a forty-two-year-old Jewish tax accountant from St. Louis. And therein lies a tale. Matt had made a vacation trip to Lebanon the previous summer. He met Sally, a thirtyish nurse employed at a hospital whose patients are mostly war casualties. After seeing Sally seven times in seven days, and receiving a predictably hostile reception from her old line Missouri family outraged at the thought of one of their own being courted by a Jew, Matt returned to his job in St. Louis. There, for the first time, he knew why he was unhappy. A year's pining later, the accountant has returned to Lebanon to ask the nurse to marry him. He arrives at Talley's folly to meet Sally, attired in a pretty dress and bound to reject his proposal.

Sally's resistance is mysteriously firm. Here is a woman well past the age at which, in Lebanon, Missouri in 1944, pretty girls are expected to be married. Now, with a chance at hand to avoid spinsterhood, a chance incarnate in a man of whom she is fond, Sally balks. Puzzling. The puzzle of Sally Talley, Matt calls it, and he is bent on solving it. Even while resisting him, Sally sets out to solve the puzzle of Matthew Friedman: what's a nice Jewish man, a good man, a single man not in the army, a man with a mild German accent doing in a place like Lebanon, Missouri? Matt has generated a mystery of his own. He has written to Sally every day for a year, all the while keeping his past darkly veiled.

A solution to this double puzzle will provide the means for a happy ending. Although Matt and Sally love one another—she confesses as much in a slip of her tongue—their happiness cannot be pursued until they are prepared to break an egg, to use Matt's metaphor. The two of them have spent many lonely years thickening their shells against the pain of past, present, and future; to allow those shells to crack is to risk

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the irruption of that pain. Nevertheless, Matt finally cracks. He is a refugee from European anti-Semitism. Born in Lithuania, he saw his sister tortured into a coma as an inducement to his father to reveal a scientific secret. In flight, cared for temporarily by an uncle and aunt, he learned that his parents would be “indefinitely detained” by the German government. From Germany Matt fled with his uncle’s family via Norway and Caracas to America “on a banana boat.” Out of his experience has come Matt’s resolve never to fight for a cause and “never to be responsible for bringing into such a world another living soul.” Fearing that no woman would be interested in a man with such a resolve, Matt has kept his past hidden from his beloved Sally.

Sally’s shell needs a great deal of chipping before Matt can open a hairline fissure. He learns that Sally, a beautiful, popular girl, a cheerleader, was destined to marry a boy who was not only a guard on the basketball team, but also the son of her father’s partner in the town’s lucrative garment factory. Sally fell ill with tuberculosis and her beauty went off to Princeton. At college he affianced and married another girl. That the break-up of this “golden couple,” the wedding of which would have cemented a business partnership, could be attributed to a bout with TB, even a year-long period of infirmity, does not add up for Matt. He pries the crack open further. The tuberculosis affected Sally’s reproductive organs. Her boyfriend’s parents refused to consent to the wedding when they learned that Sally could give their only son no heir.

Their mutual discovery of the secret closest to the core of the other’s being has revealed to Matt and Sally that her disability and his resolve are as complementary as, so to speak, a horse and carriage. As the action draws to a close, the rising moon confers a benediction on their love. A romantic ending. Yet, Talley’s Folly is much more than a romantic tale wove from the sentimental yarn of propose and parry, persist and prevail. The answer to the question of whether Sally will marry Matt is self-evident, once two prior questions have been answered. The plot of the play turns not on will-she-or-won’t-she, but on Who are you, Matt? and Who are you, Sally? Just who are you?

II

In placing the question Who Are You? at the heart of Talley’s Folly Lanford Wilson has joined his play to the body of drama which is the best the American theatre has had to offer over its two hundred years. The American drama is a drama of character. Of course, playwrights in the United States have contrived plots to chill the skin, tease the brains, and tear the eyes of their audiences. Occasionally they have articulated a social, political, or metaphysical idea. On fewer occasions they have written language eloquent enough to stand on its own as poetry. But the greatest American plays, the most durable and performable, are those in which the playwright began with a character and asked him or her not What will you do now? or What do you think? but, simply, Who Are You?

Why have so many American dramatists chosen this particular tack? The reasons are many and complex, but surely one is the wealth of available material. America is equivalent to an aggregation of intriguing characters. In The Contrast, written in 1887 and considered to be the first native American comedy, Royall Tyler brought to the stage Jonathan, a naive and rough-edged farmer from New England, and set him in the middle of polite society. The possibilities for comic incident and incongruous dialogue are rich. But much of the interest in Jonathan lies in learning who this strange fellow is. Audiences found Jonathan’s colorful answer to the question Who Are You? so satisfying, that the Stage Yankee character became an institution on the nineteenth-century American stage.

The Yankee is but one of a number of characters indigenous to the American theatre. Some of these character portraits are not flattering, some flatly racist, the Stage Indian and Stage Negro being the most unfortunate examples. Still, the American penchant for inquiry into character continued through two centuries. The play presenting a single fascinating character was joined by the “melting pot” play, a form apparently unique in world drama, in which one location, often a restaurant, a tavern, or a street corner, serves as a microcosm of American society. Edward Harrigan wrote the first of these—the “Mulligan Guard” comedies (c. 1879-1884)—about a city neighborhood burgeoning with immigrants trying to get along with one another as best they can. The comedy arises from the juxtaposition of the German, Italian, and Irish immigrants with the attendant quirks and foibles supposedly typical of persons of particular national origin.

The tradition of the American “melting pot” play is especially rich in the present century.

The tradition of the American melting plot play is especially rich in the twentieth-century. In Elmer Rice’s Street Scene (1928), Kaufman and Hart’s You Can’t Take It With You (1936), and the greatest drama of the tradition if not in the whole of American drama, O’Neill’s The Iceman Cometh (1946), plotting is clearly of secondary concern to the playwright. The action in these plays consists almost entirely of finding out who all these people are and
It has contributed to the formation of a united consciousness among Americans in the past.

how they have come to be where they are. And, the tradition continued to thrive, in William Inge's Bus Stop (1955), Tennessee Williams's Small Craft Warnings (1972), and Mark Medoff's When You Comin' Back Red Ryder? (1974). Lanford Wilson contributed the Hot l Baltimore (1972) to this series: a play about a heterogeneous group of hotel residents who fearfully await the old building's demolition as part of urban renewal.

In its presentation and exploration of character, the American theatre has served as essential function for American culture. It has interpreted us to ourselves. It has brought together Americans from all regions of a far-flung country, divided by sub-cultures, and alienated by misunderstanding. It has attempted to answer the larger question Who Are We? by answering the smaller question Who Are You? American playwrights have posed this question to farmers, housewives, athletes, salesmen, cowboys, congressmen, city people, hill-folk, drifters, drug addicts, priests, and presidents. The answers have come back in all their complexity: not simply black, white, or brown, not Yankee or Southerner, not rich or poor, young, old, Catholic or Lutheran, Gentile or Jew, but all these and many more. The theatre has contributed in the past to the formation of a united consciousness for Americans by introducing their fellow citizens to themselves. At a time when the United States seems to be embracing increasingly more and different kinds of new residents, the American theatre has much interpretive work ahead of it.

III

At the Studebaker, Talley's Folly seems overwhelmed by its setting. At some points, the technical effects prove a distraction to the lines and focus of the play. (Will that silver moon never complete its ascent on the cyclorama and sit still!) The text is long, ninety-seven minutes, to be played without an intermission, and the director, Marshall Mason, seems pressed for tricks to move the actors around the stage. The dialogue does not help him; it does not move. While the setting puts one in mind of Williams, Wilson's language is not up to Williams's evocative standard, or even Wilder's. Most of the play seems as tortured as Matt's courtship of Sally. In retrospect, it seems as if we waited an hour for the final important thirty-seven minutes.

The further I get from this production the more I find to appreciate in the play. This suggests that the stage setting truly did smother the drama. And, I continue to be curious about Wilson's use of an alienating device reminiscent of Bert Brecht. For the first ten minutes of the play Jordan Charney as Matthew Friedman spoke directly to the audience. He introduced the action and gave us a tour of the stage and all its scenic wonders, including its capability for area lighting and recorded sound effects. At Sally's entrance, all this was forgotten and the audience was permitted to believe the action was real.

At the end of the play, after we had become totally involved in the love story of Matt and Sally and all smiles at its happy conclusion, Charney turned to the audience, noted that the play ended on schedule, and bid us adieu. Why? Unless he believes that this experienced, successful playwright is just "funning around" with his work, one must conclude that Wilson is ultimately cynical about the real possibility of such a love match. Things like this happen only on the stage. We have to make them up. How unromantic! Nevertheless, the characters of Matt Friedman and Sally Talley survive this tinkering. To me, finding out who they were is the most meaningful thing this Romantic Comedy has to offer anyway.
As a rule, American film directors are more faithful than the ancient Greek tragedians in following Aristotle's dictum to present "what is possible as probable or necessary."

ly condemned by ex-Vietnam journalists and most of America's critical elite. Writing in The Nation, Gloria Emerson, author of Winners and Losers, called this film "the creation of a shrewd monster," and put forth a special plea: "Do not enrich him further by going to see The Deer Hunter." John Simon, critic for the National Review, capped his own unsparing denunciation with the ad hominem argument: "It is no wonder that Michael Cimino has made so mendacious a film, since he himself is a liar." Implicit in these angry words is a quarrel, not just with Cimino, but with tens of thousands of perceptive Americans who found The Deer Hunter moving, credible, and thought-provoking. Righteous or otherwise, wrath settles nothing. And in fact nothing has been settled. Critically speaking, The Deer Hunter is still on the loose.

Part of the explanation for this is prejudice: not the nasty prejudice of unrepentant hawks, but the wholesome prejudice of morally earnest citizens who are afraid of being cozened by any of the myths that sent us to Vietnam in the first place. The Deer Hunter may be an anti-war film, but it is not an anti-Vietnam War film; it says nothing about the political dimension of America's involvement in Southeast Asia and next to nothing about what really happened there. The two Vietnam sequences are dreamlike, grisly, and racist. Except for one wickedly decadent Frenchman (Pierre Segui), all of the film's villains are Orientals, and all of its Orientals are either villains or victims. We are given ample reason to pity the Vietnamese, but no reason to respect them. To make matters worse, the Viet Cong atrocities shown in the first Vietnam sequence bear striking resemblance to published accounts of the My Lai massacre—only on a much smaller scale. As such, the film deserved rebuke, and those critics who raised the issue of moral responsibility were right to do so. But they were wrong to belittle the film as a whole.

Though probably inevitable, it is nevertheless misleading to categorize The Deer Hunter as a film about Vietnam. One would do better to call it a film about closed societies in Pennsylvania, or a study of the lower limits of verbal communication. In spite of our discovery early in the film that Mike, Nick, and Steve (Robert De Niro, Christopher Walken, and John Savage) are leaving for Vietnam "in a couple of days," that knowledge weighs on us almost as lightly as it does on the characters themselves. There is no discussion on screen of why these men have enlisted, nor of how they perceive the war, nor of what they expect to find when they arrive. For over an hour our attention is diverted by scenes of drinking, driving, dancing, and hunting. The mood is nervous at times, but generally playful. A banner at the wedding reception in seedy Lemko Hall (American Legion or VFW) proclaims that Mike, Nick, and Steve will be "SERVING GOD AND COUNTRY PROUDLY." Yet apart from a few one-word references to Vietnam and a brief encounter with a morose Green Beret, there is nothing to particularize their destination.

The break from Clairton, Pennsylvania, to the jungles of Vietnam is absolute. Using an unmarked "slam" cut, Cimino jolts us from a scene of midwinter nights' camaraderie in John Welsh's bar, with John (George Dzundza) at the piano playing a Chopin Nocturne, to a burning village overrun by sadistic Communist soldiers, a barrage of mortar shells, and a half-crazed pig gnawing on a human limb—under the benign canopy of a sunny tropical sky. In less than five minutes, Mike, Nick, and Steve, implausibly reunited, find themselves caged in a watery stockade run by a band of Viet Cong guerillas, who are systematically exterminating their prisoners by forcing them to play Russian roulette. As the horror unfolds, so does our skepticism. We are prepared to believe the worst about Vietnam, but not this worst. We search our memories for news service references to Russian roulette during the Vietnam years, and come up with nothing. The sets are right but the action is wrong. We are looking at a mock-Vietnam, oddly out of touch with historical reality.

Only in retrospect can we appreciate the point of these Vietnam episodes. What we have witnessed is not an attempted recreation of historical reality, but a semi-symbolic representation of a personal nightmare. (Cimino has called it "surrealistic.") The perspective is that of G.I.s who have suffered immensely in an alien conflict, which, despite their own complicity, they are unable to comprehend. The artistic problem is that of conveying their unenlightened agony to a jaded audience with definite ideas (pro or con) about the Vietnam War.

In Hal Ashby's film Coming Home, paraplegic veteran Luke Martin (Jon Voight) asks Sally "Bender-over" Hyde (Jane Fonda) if her husband has written to her about his combat experiences in Vietnam. Without waiting for a reply, Luke adds bitterly, "Whatever he says, it's a hundred times worse." If words fail, too many pictures. (Both fail nicely in Apocalypse Now.) It is difficult to move an audience surfeited with violence. The War in Vietnam was a nightly TV series long before it became acceptable fare in Hollywood. Coming Home tries to convey the brutality of the war by not showing us what happened there. The Deer Hunter tries by showing us something that did not happen there—or happened so rarely as to be mere aberration. Whatever its aesthetic drawbacks, Russian roulette, complete with gushing blood and punctured crania, is gripping,
The Deer Hunter defies the canons of dramatic unity, but its proletarian characters gain a reality rarely found in American movies: a convincing semblance of freedom.

intimate, and rigorously maniacal. (A predictable achievement for Cimino, who served his apprenticeship under Clint Eastwood.) We all get two for flinching.

And yet, the real strength of The Deer Hunter lies elsewhere. Though working class films are common enough, it is a rare thing for an American movie to portray working-class life without middle-class bias or condescension. Most Americans, including many working-class Americans, take for granted the unspoken tenet of the American dream that the life of an ordinary laborer is a slightly dishonorable state, above which any capable young adult should naturally aspire to rise. What surprises us about the characters in The Deer Hunter is their lack of discontent with their glamourless jobs and dingy surroundings. These men and women are not ashamed of the work they do, nor of the homes in which they live, nor of how they spend their time. Unlike such recent converts to the American dream as Tony and Stephanie in Saturday Night Fever or young “cutter” Dave in Breaking Away, they exhibit no ambition to “better themselves” or to escape the confines of Clairton’s Russian-American ghetto.

When we first see Mike and his friends, they are sweating out the night shift inside Clairton’s mammoth steel mill (the interior was shot in Cleveland). They are surrounded by hulking machinery and streams of molten metal; fires blaze from blackened apertures amidst a constant din of clanging steel and hissing furnaces. It is a perfect image of a manmade hell—and ideal employment for The Deer Hunter’s widescreen cum Dolby sound system. Although we do not re-enter this sheltered inferno until after Mike’s return from Vietnam, and then only for a moment, the sprawling mill’s grimy exterior pursues us throughout the film. We see it from Mike and Nick’s mobile home, from the street in front of Welsh’s Lounge, from the basketball court where Mike and Nick talk, from the edge-of-town motel where Mike and Linda (merely) sleep together, and—most pointedly—from the graveyard where Nick is buried. Set against the green hills of the Alleghenies, it conjures up Blake’s “dark Satanic Mills” and stirs our repugnance to industrial blight.

But this dim view is not shared by the characters themselves. For them the mill is a natural and integral part of their protected community. It is a place to work, just as their lavishly decorated church is a place to pray or marry, their favorite bar a place to drink, and their mountains a place to hunt. We discriminate, they do not. For these second and third generation Russian-Americans, Clairton is very close to being a “New Jerusalem.” Sitting with Mike on a frozen basketball court after the wedding reception, Nick, still half drunk, utters the most revealing lines of the film: “The whole thing is right here. I love this fuckin’ place.” Though different only in point of language from the homey wisdom of Edgar Guest and Dorothy Gale, this unfashionable sentiment informs the entire production. Without sacrificing the individuality of its characters, The Deer Hunter gives us more than a sympathetic portrait of provincial steelworkers; it gives us an artful depiction of one of America’s least vocal minorities from an axiological perspective remarkably similar to their own.

Nearly thirty years ago, the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre advanced the extraordinary claim that the truth of a social order can only be seen through the eyes of the poorest of the poor. Certainly, the characters of The Deer Hunter are not among the poorest of America’s poor—except, perhaps, in one vital respect. The peculiar poverty that afflicts Michael and his circle of friends is a poverty of words rather than a poverty of material resources. Whatever the causes of their privation, and one suspects that it is largely a function of cultural heritage, these robust men and women seem to lack the linguistic wherewithal to articulate their deepest concerns, convictions, perceptions, and doubts. Language for them is not so much a means of communication as an obstacle to communication, and perhaps an obstacle to private reflection as well. Oddly enough, the same paradox applies to the smart verbal profligates of Woody Allen’s Manhattan. Allen’s characters handle language like a stack of credit cards; they substitute wit for plain thoughts and feelings, and end up buying what they cannot afford. Cimino’s characters negotiate with the small change of bowling alley vernacular; they sell short their best thoughts and feelings, holding nothing in reserve for times of crisis.

The depth of this verbal poverty does not become evident until after Mike’s return from Vietnam. The dialogue that we hear during the first hour of the picture is simple and coarse enough, a realistic blend of blue-collar banter and halting efforts at more serious conversation, but it seems roughly adequate to meet the needs of the speakers. Toward the end of the first Vietnam sequence, we watch Nick reduced to speechlessness by the irksome questions of an insensitive army doctor. Yet, given his recent agonies, the larger significance of Nick’s verbal breakdown remains unclear until we see Angela (Rutanya Alda) cowering in bed, helplessly mute in Clairton. The other survivors do better, but not much better. In spite of the emotional bonds that unite them, Mike and Linda have enormous difficulty getting beyond an exchange of banalities. Their longest and most intimate conversation takes place in Mike’s mobile home the night after his return to Clairton: “No, don’t go,” Linda says, “I
It is misleading to call *The Deer Hunter* a film about Vietnam. One would do better to call it a film about closed societies or the lower limits of verbal communication.

got all this food. I'll make you a nice sit-down dinner." “I can't,” Mike replies.

“Mike, ... why don't we go to bed? Can't we just comfort each other?”

“No, I can't, not tonight. I got to get out of here. Sorry, I got to get out. I'll be ... I don't know, I feel a lot of distance, and I feel far away. I'll see you later.” Mike leaves. And after a moment Linda follows him.

A few days later, outside the supermarket, Linda makes a stab at philosophical dialogue: “Did you ever think life would turn out like this?” “No,” says Mike. The dialogue ends.

Mike’s conversations with his male companions are a bit less strained, but just as inarticulate. Even with Steve, who has shared the worst of Vietnam and owes what is left of his life to Mike's heroics, the level of discourse is pitifully low. There is, no doubt, a limit to the amount of solace that words can provide, but these linguistic paupers are nowhere near that limit. Before Vietnam intruded on their lives, much of what they lacked in verbal skills was made up by ancillary forms of communication. Relying on the protection of familiar routines, they filled in the gaps with curses and cliches, facial expressions, gestures, rituals, and music. Now, the gap is too wide.

After Nick’s funeral, the survivors gather at John’s bar for breakfast. Except for one brief remark about the weather, their entire conversation consists of bland suggestions for preparing the meal. They speak of coffee, cups, eggs, toast, and beer. Standing alone in the kitchen over a large bowl of partially beaten eggs, John—whose special mode of communication has been a joyfully infectious laugh—starts to cry. In a palpable effort to hold back his tears, he begins to hum, and then to sing “God Bless America.” Though feeble at first, his voice gradually regains some of the strength and resonance that it had in the wedding choir at St. Thedosius’s Church. The song is clearly audible in the next room, where the rest of the party is now sitting in silence. Linda is the first to pick it up. After a moment, the others join in. When the song is over, Mike raises his glass: “Here's to Nick.” “To Nick,” the others say. The movie ends.

Far from being an expression of recalcitrant jingoism, as some critics have charged, this final scene is a gently ironic depiction of baffled mourners reaching out for words that they themselves cannot command. Lacking the capacity to articulate the mix of emotions they feel or to formulate justifications for what has happened to them, Michael and his friends fall back upon the simplistic verse of a rote-learned school song. The note of affirmation is genuine, but what they are affirming is neither the geo-political philosophy behind America’s ill-fated involvement in Vietnam nor some comic book version of “the American way.” They are affirming what they can understand and what, for them, has not changed. The emphasis falls upon the last line of the song, “God bless America, my home sweet home,” with the added qualification that “America” is nearly synonymous with “Clairton.” There is a bit of wisdom for us all in this sadly ingenuous supplication, but not a shred of knowledge. Through the eyes of these linguistically “poorest of the poor,” what we see of the larger social order that defined, debated, and ultimately repudiated America's role in Vietnam is only dismay and confusion.

Of the several techniques that save *The Deer Hunter* from pathos the most intriguing is the unpredictable progression of the film’s dramatic action. Although the behavior of the principal characters—outside of Vietnam—is eminently believable, we have no sure sense of what they will do or say next. As a rule, American directors are more faithful than Greek tragedians in following Aristotle's dictum to present “what is possible as probable or necessary.” From the moment that Jane Fonda knocks over Jon Voight’s urine bag in *Coming Home*, all the signs tell us they will end up as lovers. But Cimino practices a different art: by maintaining a mix of behavioral signs, he presents the possible as plausible without making it seem probable. The reddest of *The Deer Hunter*’s dramatic herrings is Mike's tough advice to Nick in the VC compound: “I’m saying forget [Steven], he ain't coming back.” In fact, they don’t forget him and he does come back. If we are slightly surprised later on, when Mike decides to go deer hunting just after his return from Vietnam, we are also slightly surprised when he decides not to shoot the deer—though we would have been equally surprised if he had shot the deer. Angela’s pregnancy turns out to be a non-issue, as does the romantic triangle between Nick, Mike, and Linda. There is nothing particularly mysterious about such alterations. Life is full of loose ends, false starts, changing circumstances, and spontaneous decisions. But art? Cimino pays a price for defying the canons of dramatic unity, but in return he gives his proletarian characters a quality rarely found in American movies: a convincing semblance of freedom.

A film worth seeing is no cause for wonder: probably ten percent of the films being made today warrant the high price of admission. A much rarer find is a film worth talking about. With all its flaws, and to some extent because of them, *The Deer Hunter* is a film that deserves to be discussed at length and in detail. It is soothing to discover one’s own convictions embedded in celluloid, but considerably more instructive to have those convictions called into question by a cinematic viewpoint different from one’s own.

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*The Cresset*
The Coon Dog Dies in Babylon

His earliest memory is
The coon dog dies.
There is weeping and wailing
And gnashing of teeth in Babylon.

It is the dove and the deer,
The coon and the possum
That keep them together.
Many a coon dog since that time
Has died in Babylon.

The family now is long gone
But he stays on in Babylon,
Fishing the creek
And hunting for dove and for deer,
For possum and coon.

He strums a guitar,
And the strings break, one by one.
The roof leaks,
And he shifts to another room.
The backwoods still is torn down,
He buys cheap wine in Babylon.

Every time the coon dog dies,
He ups and finds a new one.
It bays at the moon
And lays the family ghosts in Babylon.

Pat Lamorte

Bathos

The talk-show guest was explaining
how now can sometimes really be a long time ago,
that, due to the extremely slow speed of light,
the telescopd present observed by some astronomer
at any given moment may really have happened
a billion years B.C., and it had just occurred
me to wonder whether, among the novas and quasars
to be seen in the sky that very night,
might be the galactic Garden of Eden,
that self-same cosmic centrifuge that spun us all off,
When the talk-show host interrupted to give
the score of an important football game.

Gary R. Shroat

(Bathos is here corrected and reprinted from the April 1979 Cresset
where an error in its penultimate line garbled the poem. The Editor)
To the Scholars
In Laodicea

John Strietelmeier

Between 1951 and 1980, more than 3,500 promising young scholars were awarded one of the several graduate fellowships granted by the Danforth Foundation to persons interested in preparing for college teaching. This year's class is the last. It was therefore appropriate that someone should study "what actually happened to the dreams and aspirations of these talented young men and women whose careers from the start promised so much." It was even more appropriate that the person to do the study should have been R. Eugene Rice, professor of sociology at the University of the Pacific, who has served as program executive of the Foundation. His findings are reported at length in the April, 1980, issue of the American Association for Higher Education Bulletin.

The 3,500 recipients can be broken down into three discrete groups: the Danforth Fellows appointed in the 1950s, the Danforth and Kent Fellows appointed in the mid-Sixties, and the recipients of the Graduate Fellowships for Women, appointed between 1965 and 1970. For each group, representatives were invited to two Faculty Workshops on the Profession of Teaching, in preparation for which each participant was sent the statement of personal and professional aspirations that he or she had written when applying for his or her fellowship years ago. Each Fellow was asked to submit a written response to that statement, reflecting on his or her own development during the intervening years.

The results are interesting. According to Professor Rice, "The Fellows appointed in the 1950s found that there was extraordinary continuity between their career aspirations and what had actually happened to them professionally; at the same time, they were most struck by the disturbing disparity in their understanding of their world, themselves, and what it finally meant to teach, day-to-day, in a college or university."

The only thing that can possibly make the Christian university viable in the 1980s is a Christian tang. That means especially a faculty of confessors, not apostates.

Of the 1960s Fellows, Professor Rice writes that "The events of the past ten years and the individual experiences of these Fellows have eroded [an] earlier confidence" that "talented people with perseverance and new, imaginative strategies could substantially influence established institutions" and that "higher education—the teaching profession, particularly—was to play a key role in effecting institutional and societal change." The "immediate, overriding concern of the 1964-1967 Danforths and Kents—some not yet tenured—is the impact of the institutional retrenchment on their lives."

"Even some of those having more secure positions... feel boxed in—trapped."

"Recipients of the Graduate Fellowships for Women awards," Professor Rice concludes, "... seem much better prepared to adapt to the changing situation in higher education... They have been, as the sociologists would say, socialized for contingency. They have had to constantly adapt to a disorderly career pattern. Their own plans have had to be altered regularly to accommodate the demands of marriage and the family." As a result, "The GFWs are facing retrenchment in their profession with greater equanimity, partly because their aspirations were tempered by time—no mention of Nobel Prizes in their original statements, but also because their experiences have prepared them to be more flexible and adaptive."

One of the expectations of Danforth candidates was that they demonstrate a concern for religious or ethical values. A recurring theme among the Fellows in the first two groups (1950s and Mid-Sixties) is that their religious interests proved fairly short-lived. True, one of the 1951 Fellows can still say, "In my middle years, I consider myself more than ever committed to the Christian faith." But others from his group spoke of being "amused and embarrassed" or "somewhat shocked" by the theological language of their applications. Fellows from the Mid-Sixties frankly admit to having abandoned the Faith. Professor Rice cites as a typical statement the following: "Increasingly, I have moved away from expressing my own beliefs and values in theological, or perhaps even in religious terms." A 1964 Danforth Fellow wrote: "I was frankly embarrassed by the outright and unqualified profession of belief..."