

NEW FACULTY BOOKS

by Timothy Boerger '07 M.A.R

THE DIVINITY SCHOOL community gathers each spring to celebrate the literary efforts of faculty members who, through their books and articles, extend the school's classrooms into homes and parishes around the globe. The annual YDS Book Party marks each year's crop of new faculty publications with conversation and refreshment. The eleventh annual Book Party was the largest ever. What follows are concise book summaries for those who could not attend the festivities.

RANDALL BALMER, visiting professor of American religious history at YDS and the Ann Whitney Olin Professor of American Religion at Barnard College, Columbia University, sees himself as a "jilted lover." Writing as both an evangelical Christian and a political liberal, Balmer explains, "The evangelical faith that nurtured me as a child and sustains me as



an adult has been hijacked by right wing-zealots." His response to this takeover is *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America: An Evangelical's Lament*. Combining history and sociology with theological reflection, Balmer examines the origins, goals, and tactics of the Religious Right, giving special attention to the issues of abortion, gay rights, intelligent design and the environment. Arguing that his co-religionists "need once again to learn to be a counterculture," Balmer ultimately seeks "to call evangelicals back to their better selves."

According to **JOHN COLLINS**, Holmes Professor of Old Testament Criticism and Interpretation, the "theological dimension" of the Bible — "what it has to say to the modern world" — is "too important to ignore" and "too dangerous to be... relegated to the realm of unquestioned belief and acceptance." Pulling together essays published over a period of 30 years, *Encounters with Biblical Theology* exemplifies Collins's counter-proposal to the extremes of neglect and unquestioned belief. He argues for a "biblical theology grounded in historical criticism." The 15 essays in this volume represent "probes and soundings" into Collins's project. They include such titles as "Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?"; "The Legacy of Apocalypticism"; and "Jesus and the Messiahs of Israel."



Collins continues his defense of a biblical theology grounded in historical criticism in *The Bible After Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age*. Based on the 2004 Gunning Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh, this book presents Collins's reflections on "The Bible at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century," focusing on the impact of



certain strains of postmodern thought on the historical-critical interpretation of the Bible. While acknowledging that, "by training and temperament, I am on the modern side of the modern/postmodern debate," Collins recognizes that much postmodern criticism "can be construed as pushing historical criticism to its logical conclusions." Collins sees the "main gain of postmodern criticism" in its expansion of the boundaries of biblical studies "by going out to the highways and byways to bring new 'voices from the margin' to the conversation."

Taking contemporary biblical scholarship from the halls of academe to the masses, the prolific Collins also serves as editor (along with Donald Senior) of *The Catholic Study Bible*. This annotated edition of the 1991 revision of the *New American Bible* includes a collection of meaty essays on such topics as the Bible in Catholic life, archeology, translation, and the lectionary, as well as reading guides for each book of the Bible.

Gilbert L. Stark Professor of Christian Ethics **MARGARET FARLEY** never intended to write a book on sexual ethics. But she notes, "Agendas in ethics, however, are seldom set by ethicists; they are set by the questions that arise not only among students but in the wider society." *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*, is Farley's attempt to answer the



question, “With what kind of motives, under what set of circumstances, in what forms of relationship, do we render our sexual selves to one another in ways that are good, true, right, and just?” After examining the history of sexuality in the West and cross-cultural data, Farley proposes a “framework for justice in loving” characterized by no unjust harm, free consent, mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness, and social justice. Within this framework, she then explores specific issues, including marriage, same-sex relationships, divorce, and celibacy.

JOE JONES, the man described by Stanley Hauerwas as “the best unknown theologian in America,” is well known to the YDS community – as alumnus, visiting professor of systematic theology, and father of Titus Street Professor



of Theology L. Serene Jones. In *On Being the Church of Jesus Christ in Tumultuous Times*, Jones seeks to “provide some evidence as to how one passionate professor and rather minor author struggled with being a theologian for the church during tumultuous times, persisting even into this century.” Including such titles as “Letter to the Churches after 9/11,” and “Schematic Reflections on Salvation in Jesus Christ,” this collection of sermons, prayers, and essays also provides valuable insight on the background of Jones’s magisterial volume of systematic theology, *A Grammar of Christian Faith*.

L. SERENE JONES joins **AMY PLANTINGA PAUW** (an alumna of Yale’s Department of Religious Studies) as co-editor of *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics*. Recognizing that Reformed theology and Womanist/Feminist theology are often seen in opposition to one another (the lobby sign for a meeting of the book’s contributors occasioned the question of whether “Reformed Feminists” was a phrase analogous to “recovering alcoholics”), the authors remain convinced that “Reformed traditions offer resources to nourish feminist and womanist concerns, and that these concerns offer a way of carrying forward Reformed traditions.” In addition to Serene Jones’s essay, “Glorious Creation, Beautiful Law,” the book includes essays on such topics as scripture, the Trinity, predestination, providence, and eschatology.



An addition to the *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* series, the new guide to Romans written by former YDS dean **LEANDER KECK** provides a concise critical look at St. Paul’s great epistle. Written with the theological student in mind, Keck’s commentary is based on the Greek text but assumes that for most readers, “it is the Eng-



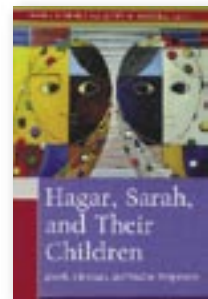
lished Paul they meet.” Keck therefore provides critical evaluation of various English language translations of key phrases, in addition to engaging current English language scholarship on the epistle.

“We hear all the time in church about redemption. We hear that word in sermons, in the Scripture readings, and it’s all over the liturgy. Will somebody please tell me what that word means?” It is this question, asked by a colleague many years ago, that Luther A. Weigle Professor Emeritus of Theology

DAVID KELSEY seeks to answer in *Imagining Redemption*, an expansion of Kelsey’s widely admired 2003 Taylor Lectures. *Imagining Redemption* examines a series of terrible events suffered by a young boy and his family to explore the practical meaning of redemption in the face of human suffering. Kelsey suggests three possible meanings for redemption: “making up for,” “redemption from,” and “fulfillment of a promise.”



Professor Emerita of Theology **LETTY M. RUSSELL** is co-editor of *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, a collection of essays growing out of the 2004 Phyllis Tribble Lecture Series at Wake Forest University Divinity School. In contrast to what the book claims is the tendency of most contemporary studies of the Abrahamic faiths to “keep the traditional focus on Abraham,” *Hagar,*



Sarah, and Their Children brings together Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars to discuss the interpretive history and contemporary relevance of monotheism's "founding mothers" from a feminist perspective. In addition to co-writing the introductory chapter, Russell contributes two essays: "Twists and Turns in Paul's Allegory" and "Children of Struggle."

CHRISTIAN SCHAREN, director of the Faith as a Way of Life Project at the Yale Center for Faith & Culture, says he has "always felt a spiritual kin-

ship" with the rock and roll megastars U2: "When my life is in spiritual upheaval, U2 has been and is a trusty companion." *One Step Closer: Why U2 Matters to Those Seeking God* represents Scharen's

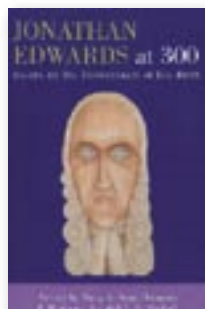
effort to share that spiritual companionship with those who "when asked if you've ever gone to church immediately think of the last time you went to a U2 concert." Mining the band's lyrics, concert staging, interviews, and speeches, Scharen demonstrates U2's deep rootedness in the Christian tradition and argues that Bono and company represent a "minor key" theology that Scharen equates with Luther's *theologia crucis*.

The year 2003 marked the tercentenary of the birth of the great American theologian (and Yale alumnus) Jonathan Edwards. To mark this event, the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University sponsored a number of academic conferences, the most important of which was held at the Library

of Congress in October 2003. The papers from that conference are now available in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Ter-*

centenary of His Birth, edited by General Editor of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* **HARRY S. STOUT**, Executive Editor of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* **KENNETH P. MINKEMA**, and Assistant Editor of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* **CALEB MASKELL**. *Jonathan Edwards at 300* presents "a snapshot" of cutting-edge scholarship on the "life, thought, and legacy" of the theologian and preacher often described as America's most original religious thinker.

"Why is it important to write a moral history of the Civil War? It's important because we are its legates, and if we question nothing from that costly conflict, then we need question nothing in conflicts of the present and future." So writes **HARRY S. STOUT** in *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War*. Stout—who in addition to his editor's position at *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* is also the Jonathan Edwards Professor of American Christianity—examines the conduct of the Civil War against the criteria of just war theory and explores the moral arguments de-



ployed on the home front. His discoveries are unsettling. The war gave birth to a "fully functioning... American civil religion," and yet "the historian searches in vain for moral criticism directed at one's own cause." This lack of self-criticism accompanied a "moral calculus" of "total war," which has since "been applied to other wars, often in cases involving nothing as noble as abolition," according to Stout.

Invited by Rowan Williams to write the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2006, Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology **MIROSLAV VOLF** responded with *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. In *Free of Charge*, his first book-length foray into popular writing, Volf offers the very character of God as an antidote to the pervasive gracelessness of a culture in which "we tend to give nothing free of charge and receive nothing free of charge."

Drawing on the thought of St. Paul and Martin Luther, Volf argues that the God who gives and forgives should serve as both the model and the source of our giving and forgiving. Volf develops these reflections against the personal backdrop of the adoption of his sons and the childhood death of his brother, resulting in a book that is at once theologically profound and deeply felt.

All of these books are available from the Yale Divinity School Student Book Supply. For more information, see www.yale.edu/divinity/sbs.

