



Proposed Graduate Program In Theology Receives State Approval

By Sandy Stark

A written proposal has been approved by the New York Board of Regents that will create a program offering a Master of Arts in Theological Studies from Houghton College. Submitted in the third week of June of this year, Houghton received confirmation this week that its proposal had been accepted. Along with graduate student tuition fees, the program will be financed by a million-dollar grant from a donor.

In recent years, the Department of Religion and Philosophy has expressed its desire to further prepare students for service by offering courses at a graduate level. The department believes that "ministerial and theological training done within the context of the liberal arts is an advantageous and preferable

approach to serving the needs of the church." Because of a recent donation, the department now has the opportunity to expand.

Dr. Richard Eckley noted that the proposal "probably would not have happened if the money had not been put in front of us." The initial donation of one million dollars will be used to fund the program's creation, in both building up the library and publicizing the first year of the program itself. Additional funds will come from graduate student tuition fees. It is hoped that more donors will also contribute as the program grows and expands.

When asked about the recent interest in and desire for such a program, Dr. John Tyson stated, "We've talked about having a graduate program for twenty of the thirty years that I've been here. Two years ago, a person stepped

forward with the promise of some financial support if we would develop a graduate program in religion. So that was a way of facilitating something that had been on our hearts for a while. We saw this timing as a part of God's hand in our lives, as the cue to go ahead."

The college had hoped that the program would be approved before the start of the fall semester, with plans in place to devote the entire year of 07-08 to advertising and recruitment. Even with the slight delay, Dr. Mike Walters, Chair of the Department of Religion and Philosophy, remains confident that classes will begin by next fall. Eckley noted that preparations had been made well in advance so that "we have things in place to hit the ground running."

The Master of Arts in Theological Studies will aim to "deepen the biblical and theological understanding of

students, with particular focus on the life of the church and its mission on the world." The Houghton program will be unique in that it will attempt to "truly interface theology with culture." A focus on mission, Walters hopes, will set it apart from other similar graduate programs. "We are going to be very intentional about it. We want to produce people that can speak theologically to the culture that is there, and not just speak prophetically against that culture."

Walters stated that the program was not created "to be sort of a fifth-year Houghton program." He emphasized that "we are certainly open to Houghton students applying and we are sure that some will, but we are really trying to appeal to people outside the traditional Houghton student body." Deliberately

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Christian Apologist Ravi Zacharias Speaks In Wesley Chapel

By Ryan Musser

Houghton welcomed Ravi Zacharias to the stage of Wesley Chapel last week after an unexpected three-year wait. The well-known Christian apologist had been scheduled to visit during the 2004-2005 academic year, but was forced to cancel at the last minute due to a personal emergency. Zacharias shared his thoughts with the Houghton community and challenged students with his message in chapel.

Due to his fame and reputation, the chapel address was one of the

most notable events on the Houghton calendar this year. Zacharias' talk centered on the philosophical changes in the western world in recent years and the appropriate Christian response. Living in the midst of "postmodernity," Zacharias warned, atheists (or "hate-theists") are becoming increasingly aggressive and intolerant. Christians, once rebuked for being intolerant, are in danger of being excluded from intellectual dialogue. According to Zacharias, however, only Christians can find their true identity as humans. "The postmodernist doesn't really

know who he is," Zacharias stated, "and we don't know where we are in this study of humanity." It is thus imperative for Christians to join in the discussion.

Zacharias cautioned his audience of the perils of being unsure of your identity: "When you don't know who you are," he stated, "[but you continue to] destroy people you don't know, humanity had better realize that if we do not have these definitions, knowledge becomes a deadly friend." The rules and principles that should govern humanity, Zacharias argued,

have already been set by God. The Christian's duty, Zacharias suggested, is to defend a "transcendent framework for reference to morality," and preserve the rules that have already been set for humanity.

Zacharias outlined a number of changes in recent times that he believed has made it more difficult for Christians to defend such a framework. Atheists have been more assertive in their attacks on Christianity, while simultaneously deconstructing traditional rules of conduct. A "gathering storm of

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WORLD OUT THERE

By Thomas Lerew

Democrats Propose Withdrawal of Troops From Iraq

Senate Democrats proposed two identical bills that detailed a schedule for pulling American troops out of Iraq. The senate majority leadership spent most of the week trying to persuade moderate Republicans to support the war-ending measures, citing the 2006 elections in November as a "mandate" from the American people for change in administration policy regarding the war. The senate body voted on several bills that included limited troop-deployment schedules and cutoffs in combat spending. All measures failed to garner enough support to pass.

Monks Stage Protests in Myanmar

Buddhist monks are staging protests against the ruling military regime in the nation of Myanmar. Earlier this month, police harassed monks and civilians during peaceful protests against the government's decision to increase fuel prices. The situation has escalated in recent days, but due to a crackdown on communication current details are vague. It has been reported that at least one civilian is dead. The Bush administration formed a U.N. resolution proposing financial sanctions against Myanmar's regime. The U.N. is expected to take up debate of the measure soon. A U.N. Envoy will also be dispatched to Myanmar as soon as possible.

Iranian President Visits Columbia University

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was invited to speak at Columbia University in New York City this past Monday. The invitation has received scathing criticism from both the president and congressional leaders. Some have even threatened to withdraw federal funding to the institution. Columbia University argued that the invitation

was a promotion of free speech and dialogue. Ahmadinejad requested to place a wreath at the former location of the World Trade Center in commemoration of September 11 but was refused and banned from the site.

Video Shows Castro Alive, Unwell

A recent video released by the Cuban government this week shows that 81-year old President Fidel Castro is still alive, but not well. Castro suffered from severe intestinal problems in July and temporarily handed over power to his brother. The video showed Castro discussing current events in very slow speech. There is much speculation about what will happen to the island nation of Cuba once the dictator passes, particularly about the role to be played by the United States.

University Shootings Stir Memories

Two male students were shot and wounded at Delaware State University last week. The violence is believed to have been sparked by a dispute between social cliques. For many, the shooting is a difficult reminder of the shootings at Virginia Tech. While a suspect has been taken into custody, Officials are still investigating the matter.

Undocumented Immigrants in N.Y. to Obtain Driver's Licenses

New York Governor Eliot Spitzer recently announced that undocumented immigrants will soon be permitted to obtain state driver's licenses. The change from the 2002 mandate has drawn sharp criticisms from many, particularly from the families of victims of September 11. They argue that the measure will allow terrorists to function more freely in preparation for new attacks. The governor believes the measure will reduce auto insurance costs and increase public safety. Many suggest that the proposed change will dramatically improve the lives of undocumented immigrants.

Cross-Country Team Places Second

By Ben Tsujimoto

Both the women's and men's cross-country teams finished second at the Houghton College Invitational on Saturday, September 22. Out of the eleven colleges that participated, the Highlander men fell eight points shy of first-place Rochester Institute of Technology, while the women only failed to outrun a dominant Ithaca team. While the sterling performances of Daniel Ballard and Kaitlin Fadden stole the spotlight, a strong team showing was necessary to hold off other contenders.

Ballard, a junior from Syracuse, established a new personal record with a time of 25:36.20, shattering his previous best by over thirty seconds. After finishing 66th in the NAIA National Cross-Country Championship last year, Ballard has raised his expectations. "I would like to finish in the top thirty in Nationals, but I'd like

to see the rest of the team go with me," Ballard stated. Despite his impressive time, Houghton's top finisher failed to catch Roberts Wesleyan College's Julius Rono, who finished 22nd at Nationals in 2006. Referring to Rono, the Houghton Invitational winner by over forty seconds, Ballard humbly admits, "Even though I finished second, I couldn't see him in the last mile." Furthering his team-oriented approach, Ballard hopes this team will not be remembered merely as a fast squad unable to fulfill lofty expectations; he wants the achievements of the 2007 Highlanders to leave a legacy.

In addition to Ballard, several Highlanders scored valuable points. Junior Chad Stauring narrowly missed a top five finish, finishing in 26:57.60. Michael Platt, who qualified for the NAIA Outdoor Track Nationals in the half-marathon, demonstrated his versatility by finishing tenth in a much

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Houghton Students Travel to D.C. For Leadership Conference

By Briana Shaffer

What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be a citizen of the world? What does it mean to be an American? How should these multiple identities interact? These questions were the focus of the Global Leadership Forum that took place this past weekend in Washington D.C. The Global Leadership Forum is an annual conference that proposes to "bring Christians together with global leaders to wrestle with the toughest issues while building relationships with other

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formed without the restrictions of sequencing, the program allows people to move in and out without falling behind, in turn catering to those who have jobs or other circumstances that make them nontraditional students. Walters suggested that these students complete the program "within a five year period. But if a traditional student was here and decided to stay they could theoretically [complete] it in a year and a half."

"We want to produce people that can speak theologically to the culture that is there... not just prophetically against it."

The current Department of Religion and Philosophy will serve as the primary faculty in the graduate program. The program has been designed to utilize current faculty as part-time graduate faculty, with most department members typically being asked to teach one graduate course per year. In order to shoulder the burden of an expanded course load, Tyson stated, "We will try to even it out," but that "it does look like a lot of new work, particularly to start up." Faculty from other departments will also be asked to teach in an adjunct capacity in order to


globally-minded Christians."

Five professors and 12 students spent Friday evening and Saturday engaging in forums that addressed the above questions through three different perspectives: diplomatic, Islamic, and humanitarian.

The keynote speakers included former Secretary of State Madeline Albright and former Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Robert Seiple. They discussed the roles of faith, American and global citizenship, and the way in which these identities have helped to shape their diplomatic

fulfill the department's commitment to theological education within the liberal arts setting. Current plans include faculty from Psychology, History, and Intercultural Studies.

Tyson emphasized that ultimately, "Our main concern is to not harm the undergraduate program by offering a graduate program." Eckley added that he "would like to think that as students see it growing and developing, they would not think of it as something odd... If it became a drag on the system, I think that then the students would have a right to ask why we're doing it."

The program will consist of a forty-eight credit hour degree, comprised of eighteen hours of core requirements and eighteen hours of Bible or theology electives. The final twelve hours will be chosen by each student in light of their own academic interests. Alternatively, they will be given the option of writing a thesis and using their remaining six hours of study in preparation for that research. During regular college semesters, course work will be offered in block formats meeting once or twice a week on either Tuesday or Thursday afternoons or evenings. In addition, summer intensives will be offered in which "pre-course and post-course assignments" will compensate for reduced class time. 

perspectives. They also spoke about how they dealt with conflicting motivations based on their identities in these three areas. They encouraged all listeners to respect, not just tolerate,

to love everyone, but we need to have the defining lines. We should take a stand against Islam but we should not hate Islamists."

Brian Hudson, a member of Dr.

"...it's about finding the root of the problems, not just putting a band-aid on them and allowing them to reoccur."

people of other faiths, cultures, and nationalities, then to act out of respect and do what they can to help. Jordan Smith, a junior Intercultural major, in regard to a comment that Seiple made about the Good Samaritan approach to diplomacy said, "I liked what Seiple said about rousting out the robbers [rather than] just helping the hurt. We have to take it a step further. It's about finding the root of the problems, not just putting a band-aid on them and allowing them to reoccur."


The second session revolved around the need for cooperation in the global sphere between Muslims and Christians. The panel engaged two American Muslims who gave perspectives on their dedication to their faith and country, and shared ideas on how American Christians can better serve the world around them. Ahmed Younis, a Senior Consultant for the Gallup Organization, and Hadia Mubarek, a Senior Researcher at Georgetown University's Center of Muslim Christian Understanding, shared their thoughts with the audience. Throughout the discussion they promoted dialogue between followers of Islam and Christianity.

Smith commented, "One of the things I really liked was what Ahmed Younis said, 'Those who speak out against Islam are the best spokesmen for extremists.' If we stopped using terms like this it could turn the current situation around. We need to have a push by Christians to choke the hate toward Islam. We can do this by having respect for them. We're called

Ndunge Kiiti's Introduction to Global Issues class, had similar sentiments. "One thing that I will remember is that you need to talk about religion when you are discussing foreign politics," he said. "Talking about religion shouldn't be weird- it's necessary."

The humanitarian discussion featured Michael Gerson, former top aide and speechwriter for President Bush and currently Senior Fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations, and Ambassador Brady Anderson, former head of USAID. The panel addressed the leadership of humanitarian aid in the U.S. as well as ways in which Christians could attempt to meet these needs particularly in the context of their faith, national citizenship, and global interaction. They examined the difficulties of the interaction between the Christian identity and American values and interests, as well as driving forces behind U.S. foreign aid.

The second part of each session consisted of an open question time in which panelists responded to inquires posed by the audience. Attendees were also given time to interact and to converse about issues presented during the sessions.

Overall, the conference was an enlightening time for Houghton students. When asked to summarize what he took away from the conference, Smith said, "We should have not a tolerance, but a respect for people of different practices, religions, and personal views, and until we have that, we can't work together to solve the world's problems." 



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shorter course. Rounding out the Houghton runners in the top twenty were Landry Jarvis and Jacob Connor, while Tyler Welsh and Jesse McConnell tallied the top times of the six Houghton freshmen competing.

In the women's race, sophomore Kaitlin Fadden, building off an appearance in the 2006 NAIA National Cross-Country Championship, recorded the Highlanders' top time, finishing fifth with a time of 19:16.60. Close behind Fadden was senior Rachel Rhodes, who completed the course in 19:29.10. Heather Hutton, another senior, was the final Highlander in the top twenty with a time of 20:07.30. These experienced runners helped Houghton fend off competition from Alfred University and the Rochester Institute of Technology.

In light of their responsibilities as hosts, the Houghton coaching staff worked diligently to attract the interest of nearby colleges by organizing a race between local high school teams on the same day. Highlander spirit and tradition were also evident; Alastair Hutton and his 11-year-old brother, siblings of Houghton runner Heather

Hutton, sported matching kilts while playing the bagpipes alongside the course. To convey appreciation for the participating teams, the Houghton College Athletic Department provided free food and t-shirts following the competitions.

As assistants to Head Coach Bob Smalley, Matt Dougherty and Mary Gibson have emphasized the advantage of running in packs, or groups of two or three runners. "Teams that can maintain packs three or four miles deep into a race succeed because it forces slower runners to keep up," says sophomore Landry Jarvis. A top runner may sacrifice his time slightly to provide a psychological edge for teammates trying to keep pace; a pack placing 8th and 9th is more beneficial than two isolated teammates finishing 4th and 16th. While many view cross-country as an individual competition, the element of teamwork is central to the Highlanders' strategy.

The Highlander men and women perform grueling training sessions during the summer to prepare for the cross-country season. Dedicated runners will complete fifty to sixty miles per week, never skipping a day of

training. By tracking their heart-rates following each run, athletes can develop the fitness necessary to complete the five mile cross-country course. For example, Ballard credits his personal record to an intense summer of nearly seventy miles per week. Forcing the body to adjust to this weekly load also reduces the likelihood of in-season injury.

To reap the benefits of summer training, the coaching staff institutes challenging preseason and in-season routines. For two weeks in August, both teams spend preseason at Star Lake in the Adirondacks to continue conditioning and cultivate team unity. Throughout the semester, morning runs are expected of athletes three to five times per week; many runners begin these forty minute workouts at 7:30 A.M., while others begin an hour earlier. In addition, the team is required to follow a lifting program twice a week, stressing core strength and high repetitions. Further measures to prevent injury and promote recovery include ice-baths, lengthy stretching sessions, and the occasional nap. Jarvis also refers to the importance of sleep and diet: "The night before a race," he

comments, "we meet for a team dinner of pasta, bread, and water, and provide time for ten hours of sleep."

The night before every meet, the team holds a time of prayer and visualization. Both Jarvis and Ballard agree that running can be a spiritual experience; the team glorifies God through the physical ability bestowed upon them. The scriptural theme of the 2007 season is Hebrews 12:1-2: "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." This bond echoes the team's focus on teamwork over individual accomplishment.

Despite a strong second meet, the team did not pause to celebrate; both teams ran eleven miles the day following the competition in preparation for the Geneseo Invitational on September 29. While the Houghton Invitational demonstrated that the Highlanders could compete with the local elite, qualifying for the NAIA National Cross-Country Championships remains a daunting task.

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cultural pluralism," has swept across our culture, Zacharias warned, placing self-evident truths and inalienable rights in jeopardy of being excluded. And as humans make visuals and feelings their end goal, our moral compass is becoming horribly misconstrued.

Christian apologetics serious about meeting the challenges posed by contemporary atheism must not merely be heard, but also seen. Zacharias was adamant that our private lives match up with our public lives. Faith's manifestation in our actions, he remarked, is the best apologetic for the skeptic. "Arguments can only clear bushes," he noted. "It is when you get them to Calvary through the power of the Holy Spirit that they sense the power of God's presence." At the center of such an approach, Zacharias pointed out, must be Biblical fidelity. "How do

you reach a generation for whom life and feeling is synonymous?" he asked. "Through a person for whom the Word and life is synonymous."

Student response to the chapel was largely positive. "It was one of the best chapels I've attended since I started at Houghton," said one student. "I just wish we could have given him more time to speak." Others expressed reservations. "I disagreed with his characterization of postmodernity as inherently wrong and anti-Christian," one student commented, "and a lot of his argument hinged on the supposed onslaught of cultural relativism. I'm just not convinced that that's the case today."

Zacharias has spoken all across the world, addressing political bodies in Washington, Peru, South Africa, Moscow, and the United Nations. He has addressed students at universities

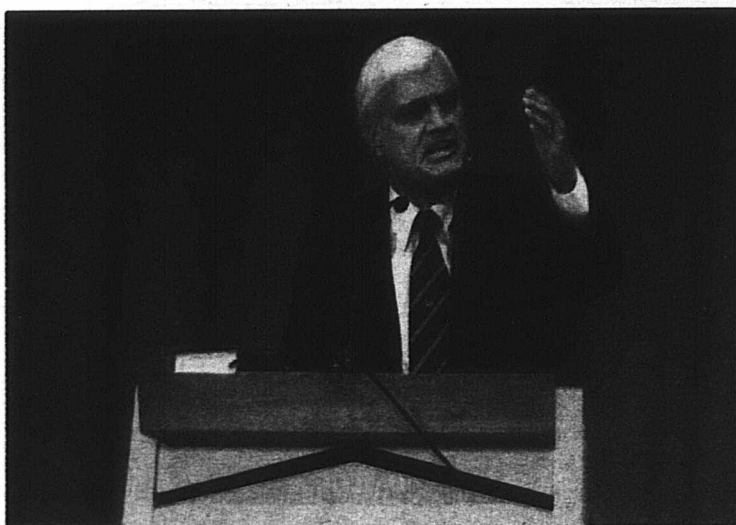


Photo By Wesley Dean

Zacharias spoke about the need for Christians to defend and articulate their faith.

such as Harvard, Princeton and Oxford, as well as challenged proponents of atheism such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Samuel

Harris. The author of thirteen books, Zacharias is currently a visiting professor at Oxford University.



A Note From the President: On Community Responsibility

By President Shirley Mullen

Last Thursday, September 20, I gave a mandate to the newly created Task Force on the Statement of Community Responsibilities. The task force is made up of representatives from the faculty, staff, student body, and administration. Their primary charge is to review the current Statement of Community Responsibilities and to recommend to me any changes that they believe will result in a better framework for cultivating a truly Christian liberal arts learning community at Houghton College.

The overall task is expected to take up to two years, and will involve periodic consultation and dialogue with each of the constituencies represented on the task force, as well as with other groups who are invested in the Houghton community such as alumni, the local community, the Board of Trustees, and the Wesleyan Church.

Once recommendations are made, I will work with the Task Force to identify appropriate processes for moving these recommendations forward toward final approval. While final approval for any changes would come from the Board of Trustees, it is absolutely critical that each of the constituencies involved "buy in" on any potential changes.

the task force and ongoing community governance structures (e.g. *Star*, Student Government, Student Life Committee, Religion Department, and Academic Planning Committee). In the case of staff and faculty, the members were chosen in consultation with staff cabinet and the Academic Dean's Office, respectively. The goal was to put together a task force of even-handed thinkers from a range of perspectives, with no more than one member from a given grouping.

The task force will be chaired by Jack Connell, Houghton's executive director of Church Relations. Jack is an alumnus of 1983, a former member of the Board of Trustees, an ordained pastor and an academic. Joining him from the administration are Daryl Stevenson from the Academic

Dean's Office, Sharra Durham from Student Life, and John Brittain, Dean of Chapel. Representing the faculty are Michael Walters, Gary Stith, and Ndunge Kiiti. Staff representatives include Matt Webb, Lori Smith, and



Photo by Houghton College

A new task force will recommend any changes to the Board of Trustees.

our community—not just the students. We are a community of older and younger learners and the quality of our community affects us all.

Second, the Statement of Community Responsibilities, when it is finally revised, needs to provide a compelling vision of what we want to be *for* as a community, and not simply what we want to be against. Or, to put this another way, it needs to speak to the core values of our community, as well as to boundary issues. In fact, the core values should be the main emphasis of the document.

Third, the Statement of Community Responsibility should set forth a vision for a community that is most likely to facilitate the development of whole people—as that notion of wholeness is understood in the Christian liberal arts tradition—and as that notion of wholeness is reflected in the Wesleyan heritage. What is common to both of

these traditions is a commitment to integrating one's personal beliefs with one's commitment to make the world a better place.

Even at the first meeting, the task force recognized that there is at least one key "boundary issue"—one that was a main focus of the last review of the Statement of Community Responsibilities—the issue of dancing on campus. It was the consensus of the Task Force at this first meeting that there will be better discussion about the larger vision of community life if we seek to look at the dancing issue first. The dancing issue was not only the subject of concern in the last review, but was also the subject of a number of articles in the *Star* last spring.

The chair of the committee appointed a small sub-committee to begin working on this issue. It is expected that, as part of this focus, the student representatives will host an open forum on this topic for the student body.

In conclusion, the Task Force recognized that our community is not of one mind—especially on the issues that we might think of as "boundary issues." The task force is committed to listening to all positions, and to making sure that these matters are discussed with graciousness and with respect for all those involved. It is the task force's hope that this process of reviewing the statement will be a valuable time of community building for Houghton, rather than a time of division and hard feelings. To put this another way, we will have failed to be the kind of community we ultimately want to be if we cannot have this discussion about our community in a spirit of fair-mindedness, mutual respect and Christian love.

Please address any questions to your representatives, to Jack Connell, or to the president's office.

The Statement of Community Responsibilities... ...needs to provide a compelling vision of what we want to be *for* as a community.

This is not to suggest that the ultimate decisions will be made by "majority rule," but rather that there should be room for appropriate discussion at all levels of the process. Thus, the process will be both educative and dialogical at all stages.

Members of the task force have been chosen with the intent of building in ease of communication between

Naomi Smith. Finally, the student representatives are William Airhart, Jason Fisher, and Amy Labzentis. I will be an *ex officio* member of the task force.

In laying out the charge to the task force, I emphasized several key points: First, the Statement of Community Responsibilities is to reflect the values and commitments of all members of

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From the Editors' Desk...

Can Houghton Come Out and Play?

Sometimes, a non-activity isn't as calm and sincere as it may sound.

By Timothy Bastedo

I know that there has been a significant event in the activity of Christianity (a schism if you will), and we are still feeling its aftershock today, perhaps even in Houghton. This significant break makes itself known at best indirectly, but signs of its tenure are everywhere if you only stop to listen.

How has this schism in the activity of Christianity occurred? It is difficult to say, but I would venture to guess that the ease with which the activity has been replaced (de-centered, if you will?) by what we might call the non-activity has something to do with it (though the use of "ease" here is deceptive, since the practice of the non-activity often proves frustrating and difficult, with one D, two F's, and two I's to be completed next semester; but can the non-activity be actively difficult, or is this mere nonsense?). And yet perhaps here it is unfair to describe the non-activity as such; is not knowing a sort of activity?

Yet we have grasped it even here, for I cannot shake the feeling that I know that I have misspoken, and that it would be more accurate to describe our present predicament as one of non-activity. If the non-activity's "activity"—the knowing—is confined to itself, can it be said to act in the actual sense of the word? Putting aside the question of action, can it even exist if separated from action, or is its existence only actualized when it is joined to the activity? It would seem more apt to describe the knowing as a re-action, though that seems to fail to grasp the nature of the non-activity, too, since while it may be a reaction, it is only so in a certain sense since the term "reaction" assumes passivity, and the non-activity only assumes its proper function if it reacts back upon that which it was previously a reaction to, judging the activity and guiding it

in the future. The relationship between the activity and the non-activity is as important to each as it is to the other. The non-activity may be said to be properly placed only when it is attached to the activity, and yet the activity is also not complete unless the non-activity has been attached to the activity.

Therefore, the non-activity, the knowing, may be better described as a non-activity in reference to the activity, and herein lies the key, since the non-activity is not able to be separated from the activity and remain whole. The non-activity might be considered an activity when considered in itself, and yet to consider it in itself is to misunderstand the nature of the activity, to fail to view it in its proper frame of reference, and therefore to not truly view it at all. Shorn of its proper context, it is merely a shadow of itself. The true essence of the non-activity, of the knowing, comes not from itself, but from the not-knowing, the activity. And yet, as I alluded to above, the non-activity is not solely the creation of the activity, but also serves to create the activity to a certain extent.

Perhaps here we have an inkling of the sort of event that has happened to the activity of Christianity. For the non-activity and the activity seem to have been separated, each taken from its proper relationship with the other. This has largely been to the "benefit" of the non-activity, though I use the term loosely since the violence done to the term cannot be a benefit except that the violence is not recognized as such. The non-activity has been separated from its proper position in reference to the activity, and stands alone, as though it were somehow worthy of value by itself, that we might assign some letter value to it with the vague notion that it means something, but exactly what we cannot be sure, since without its proper context the non-activity can never be

Why Something May Be More Important Than Everything (and Other Absurdities)

A reader responds to last week's op-ed on the importance of Harry Potter.

By Christopher Winkens

Apart from the usual arguments against reading Harry Potter, the most distressing thing about the recent article in the *Star* is that it is written by a Philosophy major who is apparently majoring in missing the point. Now, I am sure that if there have been antagonistic responses to this article, they are probably based on the evangelical arguments for and against the Harry Potter movement. I have no intention of justifying these arguments. Whether a child shouldn't read a book by J.K. Rowling because it contains witches and wizards, but then should be encouraged to read a book by Tolkien or Lewis, which also contain witches and wizards, I cannot answer. That is an issue for individuals to determine for themselves, but nothing I can be decidedly dogmatic about, except when it comes to my own children.

The declaration that Harry Potter may be more important to the modern Christian than the Bible is a strange notion indeed. To say that a book which emphasizes biblical themes is more important than the source from

fulfilled, can never function correctly.

Perhaps the schism is exposed in places like Houghton, where many people devote little to the activity because the non-activity requires so much time. The deception is that the non-activity cannot be fully actualized without the activity, and so those who eschew the activity in (a supposed) favor of the non-activity cheat themselves from fully experiencing the non-activity itself. The most important part of the much-maligned phrase "scholar-servant" is the hyphen. I know that at least a few of us (or perhaps just me?) have forgotten that.

Tim serves as commentary editor and is a senior Philosophy major.

which it derives those themes is like saying that a tree can subsist without roots or the seed from which it was born. It should seem fairly obvious to any Christian that the entire world overflows with biblical themes (not to mention unbiblical themes) and one can just as easily say that because Oliver Twist gives a portrayal of suffering and redemption, that the modern Christian should read Charles Dickens before he reads St. Paul. Now, I enjoy a good novel as much as the next person, but may I be stricken with the madness of Nebuchadnezzar and start eating grass if I make Jane Austen or Tobias Smollett or H.G. Wells the compass by which I navigate my existence. Let us enjoy our idols, but for Heaven's sake, let us not worship them!

Another point that seems to be emphasized in this article is the case for cultural relevancy, a curious argument that is somewhat meaningless. What is apparently being said is that the God of the universe gave instructions to mankind with a 5,000 year warranty, and that at the end of that period, the instructions would be of little to no use, and we should find some other means of authority and inspiration. (This incident, oddly enough, happened to coincide with the era of Enlightenment and the advent of Deism and Higher Biblical Criticism.) The author of the *Star* article refers to "Jesus' parables (that) are so outdated that it takes a sermon to learn both the literal and moral meanings," yet at the same time expects our little minds to recognize all of those obvious 'biblical morals' and 'Christian ethics' evident in the Harry Potter books. How can a small brain like mine possibly know what a biblical theme is when I cannot possibly relate to a book like the New Testament overflowing with Greco-Roman-Judeo cultural enigmas that are beyond my 21st century American comprehension.

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• *Harry Potter* continued from page 6

The author is correct when he remarks that "Jesus' parables... [are] profoundly significant of some deeper truth," but since that deeper truth is too deep for us to attain, I suppose it will remain a quasi-inspiring, fantastical sentiment and I can go on finding my daily bread in *Deathly Hallows*.

What is most disconcerting is that the fans of J.K. Rowling seem to have made Harry Potter into some kind of a god, but may I be so bold as to remind them of the portions in Romans and Jeremiah when God declares that He is the *Potter* and we are the clay. Considering the self-exalting individualism of our age, I cannot think of anything else that is more culturally relevant than that simple reminder and admonition.

Mr. Winkens works in the Willard J. Houghton Library.

The HOUGHTON STAR is dedicated to the free exchange of ideas, and encourages community members to participate in the discussion. Ideas expressed in these pages reflect solely the opinion of the writer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit any contributions for reasons of length or decorum. Letters to the editor (signed) should be 500 words or fewer and be submitted to STAR@houghton.edu. Names may be withheld upon request.

Confess Your Sins In Hell House, Or Hell Awaits?

A student reviews the recent Film Series event and responds to the questions and issues raised by Hell House

By Stefan Zoller

Last week, the Lecture Series presented *Hell House* along with a faculty panel discussion following the film. Every October, Trinity Church of Cedar Hill, Texas builds a holy haunted house called "Hell House." Thousands of visitors in the greater Dallas area come to see the horrors of secular America, graphically enacted by the members of the church, the majority of whom are teenagers. The documentary film *Hell House* captures the conception, construction, and execution of the whole production.

In the opening scene, the head pastor of Trinity stands alone talking about the responsibility of the church—to warn people of the coming danger. As the opening credits roll, the camera pans an enormous crowd of people lined up to see *Hell House*. The cameras then take us inside the church where the pastors and leaders are brainstorming new twists and shocks for their already well-established production. *Hell House* is a series of scenes, each devoted to the depiction of a particular sin and its consequences. Enthusiastic students from Trinity's high school try out for various parts; one girl is shown celebrating with her friend after getting the part of "abortion girl."

In between the hectic planning and building, we are introduced to churchgoers who are involved in some way or another with *Hell House*. Among the congregation, we meet a single father shown preparing his children for school when his young son goes into a seizure. This act of fatherly love is set in contrast against the whole mentality of *Hell House*, which never mentions God's compassion or love. When the opening night of *Hell House* arrives, the audience is exposed to scenes of suffering and violence, including domestic abuse, homosexuality, rape, suicide, and a botched abortion. In the final room, a church member lectures

the audience and offers a choice between two doors: one leading to prayer leaders to assist you in being "saved," and another exiting *Hell House* and presumably on the pathway to hell. The audience listens as six seconds are dramatically counted down before the door to salvation is closed.

After the film, the faculty panel was made up of Communications Professor David Huth, Bible Professor Kulli Toniste, Vice President of Student Life Sharra Durham, and counselor Mike Lastoria. Huth extolled the film's formal qualities and noted the difficulty of making a successful documentary. Huth cautioned, however, that however much we may love the individuals in the film, the church's use of guilt, shame, and fright as a motivator for salvation was damaging.

Toniste discussed her Pentecostal background and noted that evangelism can become a demi-god for some churches, especially within the Pentecostal tradition. "How are we raising our kids?" she asked. Sharra Durham questioned whether *Hell House* was an effective way of drawing a person's attention to their need for Christ. Perhaps for some, she said, but for others it may cause them to reject Christianity anew. Mike Lastoria best summarized the individuals in the film as "well-intended but misguided." He noted the extremely young age of the actors and actresses playing very adult roles along with the strange zealotry of the adults involved. The emphasis on Hell was also unfortunate, according to Lastoria, especially since their depiction of hell (or heaven, for that matter) had nothing to do with God or his absence.

What I personally found most disturbing was the youth of the audience, not to mention the actors and actresses. Who is to say what kind of effect a graphic depiction of rape, abortion, or suicide will have on the mind of an 11-year old? I couldn't help but

think of the Hitler Youth as I watched scenes of Trinity's schoolteachers and pastors indoctrinating impressionable kids with the church's dogma. When do we cross the line between teaching our kids and brainwashing them? Homosexuality—AIDS—Hell. Harry Potter—Ouija Board—Occult—Hell.

The *Hell House* scene depicting rape was especially distasteful due to where the blame was pointed. A girl at a rave is slipped a date rape drug and passes out. She is later raped and convinced by a demon that she is worthless and that her rape was the result of her making "bad decisions"—so she slashes her wrists and is sent to hell. What about the guy that gave her the drug and raped her? The Columbine-like scene is similar: a picked-on kid is pushed too far and commits suicide in front of the class—he is physically dragged off by a demon. What about the kids who made his life a living hell every day?

Another troubling element of the film was the Americanized, impersonal way in which people were being brought to Christ. At one point the head pastor says to the other church leaders "we are competing for souls." While this is true in one sense, Trinity Church appears to be only concerned with numbers. This concept is illustrated with the theatrical countdown in the ending scene. *Hell House* operates like a fast food joint for souls. Having a *personal* relationship with Jesus is never mentioned once in the entire *Hell House* experience.

Ultimately, one could write a doctoral thesis on *Hell House* and the problems with Trinity Church. The documentary was well put-together in terms of its structure, formal qualities, fairness, and questions it raises. What are effective ways of evangelizing, and do we know our audience? I'm afraid that if you haven't seen this film, you're probably going to hell.

Stefan is a senior Art major.



Self Portrait in Red

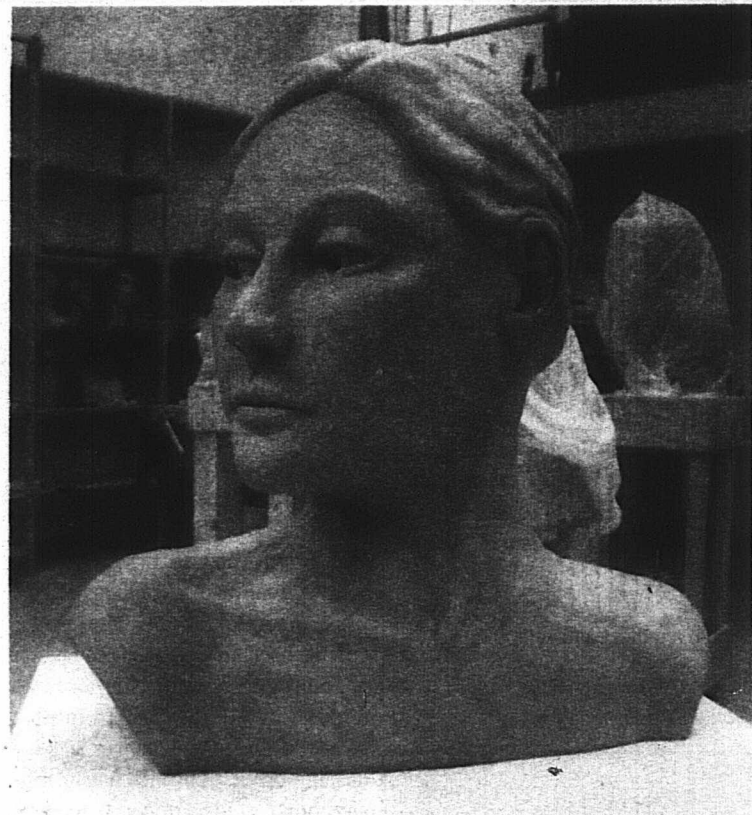
featured artwork of the week

Note from the Artist:

'Self portrait' is an oil painting done from a photo of myself which I had cropped and strengthened in terms of contrast. It seemed like it would make an interesting painting, especially considering its shape and size (approximately 3' high), and I thought it would be fun to deviate from flesh tones and instead work in oranges and reds. Young Woman was a recent assignment for Figurative Sculpture in Clay, a class I'm taking currently. It was my first time working from a model, which was extremely helpful when articulating small details such as the lips, ears, and eyes.

Libby is a senior Art major with a Drawing concentration.

if you would like to see your artwork featured in the Star, send submissions with titles and a descriptive paragraph to STAR@houghton.edu



Young Woman

On The Mental Capacity of Paul McCartney

By Steve Woolsey

At 65, Paul McCartney has enjoyed one of the most celebrated careers of any rock musician. Much of this is a result of his membership in what is arguably the history's most popular band, the Beatles. His most recent album and 21st solo studio effort, *Memory Almost Full*, was released in the US on June 5th, on Starbucks' brand new label, Hear Music. The album title came from a message he received on his cell phone, and debuted at #3 on the Billboard Top 200.

This album was written from a youthful, nostalgic perspective. Macca doesn't attempt to answer all of life's questions but rather remarks on the various concerns of a young teenage Brit. *Memory Almost Full* is first and foremost a pop album rife with hooks both light hearted and upbeat. Track highlights include "Mr. Bellamy" and

"See Your Sunshine".

Musically speaking, this release is diverse and will spark your interest through the first listen. As expected, there are glimpses of Beatlesque melodies within. "You Tell Me", is reminiscent of George Harrison's "Something" on the Beatles' 1969 release, Abbey Road. A witty commentary can be found in "Vintage Clothes": "What we are is what we are, and what we wear is vintage clothes...we jump up for joy; who cares if we look like a girl or boy?" He's made some groundbreaking discoveries, it seems.

If you're looking for heart or soul, search elsewhere. This album was released on a label owned by the country's largest coffee chain. You'll hear it next time you decide to empty your wallet for that much needed "hold me through the afternoon" latte. The opening track, "Dance Tonight", unfortunately incorporates whistling and,

perhaps more unfortunately, gets away with it. An opener with such a care-free tone puts the album in context; it shouldn't be taken too seriously. It's followed up by a pulsating "Ever Present Past", a piece that you will probably find yourself torn over: some moments will stir up annoyance, while others will trigger mild amusement and occasional satisfaction as a result of a creative few mid-chorus harmonies.

Memory Almost Full is a thirteen song album packed with catchy pop songs that will satisfy fans, but probably not make new ones. The album is unspectacular, and scores of other albums and artists deserve your attention more. I say, don't give previously successful artists the benefit of the doubt beyond an album or two; keep them accountable. ☺

Steve is a senior Business major and local musician.

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