THE BIBFELDT HUSTLE,

or

SATURDAY NIGHT PLAGUE:

SOME RECENT THEORIES
OF PASTORAL CARE

W. Mark McLemore

3 May 1977
The explication of the theories of pastoral care originated and espoused by our own dear Franz Bibfeldt leads us at the outset to a brief re-examination of the best recent semi-auto-biographical data available. You will recall, I am sure, the colorful expositions of the "G" (Grant), "B" (Brauer), "M" (Marty), "L" (Landon), and "P" (Price) sources. While mighty contributions to the history and lore of Bibfeldtiana, each of these sources by itself cannot stand up to the careful and continuing scrutiny of scholars such as we fancy ourselves to be. In short, they are not the best exemplifications of the total spectrum of Bibfeldt-ology today. If we are to examine the evolution of Bibfeldt's theory and practice of pastoral care, we must glance briefly at the life of this great man—a life he himself has characterized, in a phrase reminiscent of Socrates' "gadfly of Athens" statement, as "a pimple on the nose of modern theology." We shall thus turn to these sources and commence our brief sketch with them, secure and confident that we have authority for so doing in the directive of the "L" source to "look first to the sitz im leben—and then ignore it."

Bibfeldt, you will remember from the "M" and "P" sources, was born in the trundle seat of an 1892 Volkswagen Rabbit on November 1, 1897. His life is sketchily attested; however, we know some reported incidents to be true. Bibfeldt, for example, did write his doctoral thesis on "The Problem of the Year Zero", a continuing concern that causes him to this very day to arrive either a year early or a year late—and sometimes both—for any appointment. He achieved some fame through the publishing of The Relieved Paradox, the masterwork that sets forth his theological method
of Both/And, Bibfeldt's way of achieving what he saw as the theological task: to reconcile all opposites and make things come out right. Furthermore, we know that he has visited America at least twice, once gracing Swift Hall with his presence and leaving a graffito on the wall of the basement men's room. This graffito was erroneously reported in the "M" source to have been the cryptic statement "God grades on the curve", the epigraph from Bibfeldt's book *The Crooked Way*. Recent archeological investigation, however, indicates that the graffito in its entirety is somewhat longer. It reads: "God grades on the curve. For a demonstration, come to the third stall from the left between 4-6 P.M., August 4, 1970. Use foot signals." Needless to say, all those who tried to keep this appointment were disappointed. And we do not know if Bibfeldt ever returned to Swift Hall after what he saw there.

But enough of a chronological account. We shall return to any significant details of Bibfeldt's life as the occasion arises while interpreting his thoughts on pastoral care. However, we must ask one final biographical question: what has become of Herr Bibfeldt today? The "M" source leaves Bibfeldt at Esalen sometime in the early 70's. The "L" source claims that Bibfeldt comforted Pres. Nixon during his famous "prayer with Kissinger" episode over the telephone, undoubtedly demonstrating Bibfeldt's involvement in the "Dial-a-Prayer" movement of that era. The "P" source—here spurious, no doubt—alludes to Bibfeldt's residence at an unlikely place called the Brandenburg Home for Indigents and Crazies, Brandenburg, W. Germany. Obviously, nothing is clear. But one simple fact stands out: Bibfeldt is now 81 years old. And at this
point a serious question must be asked: Is Bibfeldt still alive?

Let us attempt an answer. A short two years past, Mr. Dennis Landon stood before us and enunciated his theory of "Bibfeldt enjoying culture" and proposed his hermeneutic of "looking for the man who wasn't there" in order to join the quest for the historical Bibfeldt in culture. We affirm this principle; we have witnessed its fruitfulness in that short span of time and we shall use it ourselves. Yet, as Bibfeldtians good and true, we are shocked in retrospect at the ease with which this one-sided hermeneutic was accepted. We must follow the Bibfeldtian program through to its end; we must not allow ourselves to rest with either affirmations or negations. In short, if two years past we looked for the Bibfeldt who wasn't there, this year we must look for the Bibfeldt who is. And so doing, we assert: Bibfeldt is boith here and not-here. He is alive (and yet, we must add, in some strange manner dead); and, more important to today's topic, he is participating in the general theological discussion and his participation centers around the area of pastoral care.

Enough questions have been raised so far to satisfy the most skeptical doubting Bibfeldtian; we no longer will question the facticity of his life. However, in order to balance the scale, we will now turn to the evidence of his life among us today. First, we must recall the motto to his recently-released essay on the lack of creativity in boring theological titles. This essay is itself entitled in a masterful piece of irony beating the Whirl wind into the Ground. The motto, Bibfeldt's favorite Scriptural citation, reads "Lo, I am with you always," to the close of
the age." (Matthew 28:20b, RSV)² In this motto to his incisive essay, Bibfeldt gives clear indication of his intent to haunt us for many years to come.

Two further data—in this instance, two songs from popular culture—will be adduced as evidence of Bibfeldt's continuing life among us. Each of these tunes has topped the charts in the past 6 months; both are blatantly Bibfeldtian in form and content. The first is a bland and innocuous little number: "You light up my life", performed by Debbie Boone. Ostensibly dedicated to her father, Pat Boone, popularizer of white bucks, the song reveals itself under analysis by the renowned Bibfeldtian hermeneutic of bullgeschichte. In fact, it is a paean of praise to Ms. Boone's personal and musical mentor, our Franz. For who else but this utter genius of adaptation and coincidentia oppositorum could put the word "light"—known to describe the combination of all colors—into the lyrics of a song sung by so colorless a performer as Debbie Boone? Additionally, the presence of the word "life" also reveals Bibfeldt's handiwork in this cleverly serious joke. Surely he is aware of our quandary over his continuing existence and is making a statement of this quixotic sort in partial reply. The second pop hit to which we point is a part of the soundtrack from the surprise movie hit of the year, Saturday Night Fever. It is obvious—one need not even be an experienced practitioner of bullgeschichting to see this right off—that Bibfeldt is making as clear a statement as possible of his continuing productive theological existence in the song "Stayin' Alive." The context of this song is crucial to understanding the present-day Bibfeldt; but we
shall return to that later.3

We can now take it as conclusive that Bibfeldt is alive and "with us", as the Scripture says. But what of his work in pastoral care? We have ample evidence for Bibfeldt's contributions in this field, and here, obviously, is the place to give this great man his due.

Again, you will recall that Bibfeldt was "for some time a parish pastor." Furthermore, we know that on his second American visit he made a pilgrimage to the Playboy Mansion in Chicago—surely a Mecca of the healing arts for millions of American males. The "M" source tells us that Bibfeldt visited Esalen, and we learn from the "L" source that he had much experience with the human potential movement. But his first serious work in pastoral care theory is surely represented by Bibfeldt's attempt to come to grips with the non-directive, client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers. Bibfeldt's adaptation of Rogers, spelled out in his famous book I Hear What You're Saying, But I Just Don't Care (see catalogue entry card attached) has come to be known as Self-Centered Therapy, or as some hostile reviewers scornfully described it, the "new narcissusism." In this work Bibfeldt presents his discovery that the phrase "I hear what you're saying" has a peculiarly soporific quality to it. Thus he advocates incessant repetition of that phrase, by client and therapist in turn, until the point at which both fall into a sound, trance-like sleep. Bibfeldt, of course, was firmly convinced of the therapeutic value of sleep in "helping one forget one's troubles"; he has set forth further
research into the historical antecedents of this technique in an unpublished essay entitled "Rip Van Winkle as the Father of Modern Psychotherapy." Case studies of his use of the self-centered method in pastoral care and its relations to his theological stance are presented in the now out-of-print classic *Theology after Van Winkle*. Bibfeldt was forced to abandon this self-centered model of pastoral care due to its general ineffectiveness, particularly in working with the deaf, since he felt that the phrase lacked integrity for them.

During a brief stint of pure academia, Bibfeldt read Don Browning's work *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* and flirted briefly with a James-styled pragmatic approach. He left us with but one judgement concerning this school of thought: "Pragmatism is all right, as long as it works."

The "L" source tells us that Bibfeldt was also drawn to the "human potential" or "self-actualization" movement--rolfing, est, scientology. He underwent Transactional Analysis, "where it was discovered that his parent, adult, and child were indistinguishable from each other and, what is more, formed three 'selves' of a multiple personality, calling themselves Moe, Larry, and Curly." But the "L" source does not tell us how Bibfeldt was also excited by his discovery of the multiple uses of the phrase "I'm OK" and its various permutations--"I'm not OK"; "you're OK"; "you're not OK"; "I'm OK but you're not so hot"; et alia. The flexibility of this phrase "I'm OK" thrilled Bibfeldt at first because he suspected that its various forms might produce sleep-inducing qualities similar, or perhaps superior, to the phrase "I hear what you're
Furthermore, the possibilities of the phrase's permutations fit well into the methodological stance of Both/And: e.g., "I'm not OK and that's OK", and so forth. However Bibfeldt became disillusioned with the possibilities of this method of care when he found that repetition of this phrase had a definite grating and unsettling effect on client and therapist alike, especially when spoken in Bibfeldt's own native tongue. I here quote Bibfeldt:

> Imagine, if you can, the auditory effect of these phrases: 'Ich bin OK; du bist OK; er, sie, es ist OK; Ich nicht bin OK.' It was not OK!! After several attempts with this therapeutic technique, I learned always to hold my sessions in a basement room, as both client and therapist were often driven to emulate lemmings and attempted to throw themselves from the office window. Not quite the desired effect!!

Needless to say, Bibfeldt abandoned this model as well in some desperation.

The past month has seen the reporting in two major newswEEKlies and even the Chicago Sun-Times of May 2, 1978, of a new form of Bibfeldtian psychotherapy known as "paradoxical therapy." This new therapeutic model represents the next stage on life's way for the Bibfeldtian in search of his/her mentor's influences on present-day pastoral care. Psychiatrist Allen Fay has published the book Making Things Better by Making Them Worse (Hawthorne Press, $7.95). Paradoxical therapy was pioneered three years ago by Bibfeldt himself in an early attempt at injecting his theological method of Both/And directly into pastoral care technique. I quote here from the Sun-Times:

> The paradoxical technique is a reverse psychology of sorts. The therapist agrees with a person's assessment of himself, or of his situation. Instead of telling the person that his assessment is nonsense, which usually makes him more angry and frustrated because he believes no one understands him, the therapist agrees with the assessment. Then the person sees how silly he is.
We gladly affirm that Bibfeldt is at the source of this therapy of agreement and joke that so well fits his life's work; after all, he has put all his energies into proving to himself and others just how silly he is!

Bibfeldt, however, has now moved on to even greener pastures than those opened by his brilliant exposition of paradoxical therapy. You will remember the mention we made earlier of the brief stint of pure academia in which Bibfeldt read Prof. Browning's little book on pastoral care. Bibfeldt also found himself called at this time to begin to get back to his earliest theological roots in order to confront the problems of an adequate theory of pastoral care. His first move in this direction was to re-investigate his family tree, a fairly common preoccupation. But Bibfeldt's family crest and coat of arms offered him a delightful surprise when he recalled that the motto on this coat of arms was "I dance to the tune that is played." Bibfeldt thought that this represented a thrilling root, and he decided to hang onto this precept as a part of his forthcoming works. He next attempted to recapture his theological roots. To this end, he returned to a study of Søren Kierkegaard, from whom Bibfeldt had derived his theory of Both/And in response to SK's own stance of Either/Or. Bibfeldt finally understood SK's thoughts on "infinite reflection" when he visited the House of Mirrors at a travelling carnival that stopped nearby, and he determined to hold onto this aspect of SK's thought as a precept as well. Finally, Bibfeldt found himself intrigued once again with trinitarian doctrine. Here he felt truly both three-in-one and one-in-three! at home! This classically Bibfeldtian doctrine was drawn out fur-
ther in a pseudonymous article published recently in *Christianity & Crisis*, an article in which Bibfeldt presents the fruits of his investigations into the actual three-in-oneness and one-in-threeness of the person we know as Martin E. Marty, but who is known elsewhere as Harvey Cox or Andrew Greeley. Armed with his discovery of the possibility of actuality in trinitarian economies—and when Bibfeldt saw "Marty-Cox-Greeley's" combined royalty checks and honoraria he took the word "economy" seriously!—Bibfeldt felt equipped to take on the problem of pastoral care again.

Bibfeldt then faced up to his task. The problem was this: how to relate and accommodate these three precepts—trinity, "infinite reflection," and "dancing to the tune that is played"? How does one put these roots (or "root metaphors" as they are sometimes called) together in a way that allows everything to come out right? Bibfeldt was led to one inescapable conclusion: that any true Bibfeldtian pastoral care could only be performed in singles bars and discotheques. Only there, in the discos, did everyone "dance to the tune that is played." Only there, amidst the flashing of the strobe lights and the hissing of the fake fog machine, could be found enough mirrors for an infinity of infinite reflections. And there he would find singles—a representation of the the unitary pole of a trinity necessary for any trinitarian theorist. Or if he found couples, he, Bibfeldt, would make them a threesome! And everyone would be then providing infinite reflections of both three-in-oneness and one-in-threeness, all the while dancing to the tune that was played!
Bibfeldt was thrilled by the possibilities. But his work "in the trenches" has left him precious little time in which to publish about his findings. What we have concerning this necessary and loving labor are several hints. We know that Bibfeldt suffered an unfortunate and embarrassing injury while attempting to acquire a since he jumped nervously at the wrong moment dueling scar as a young man. He acquired the scar, but it was in a place that he could never expose. Thus we have heard that he is planning to publish his definitive work on "discotherapy" under the title *Ungenerative Man*. We also know that Bibfeldt has had difficulty relating to his dancing clients the possibilities of eternal punishment, and that he has resorted to the medium of popular music, turning out the hit disco single "Disco Inferno." And we have had strong indications that Bibfeldt is attempting to develop specific style and modes of interaction with his clients that are correlative and consistent with his *Both/And* theological stance. He has characterized this style as "In/Out Interaction", but we hear that he has not had much success in refining his techniques clinically.

How, in the end, do we characterize our odyssey? We have moved from men's rooms to discos; from Rogers to paradoxical therapy. We are tempted to agree with the Grateful Dead in a line from their now-classic song *Truckin'*: "What a strange, strange trip it's been!" Or, as does the Bibfeldtian TV reporter in the comic strip *Doonesbury*, we might close with the phrase "Life goes on." How—when it comes to Bibfeldt, ever^\w^ we feel inclined to agree with the attitude of the Sufi Mulla (teacher) Nasrudin who, after moving to a new address, was approached by his mailman.
The postman called and said: "I hope that you are satisfied with the mail deliveries."

"More than satisfied," said Nasrudin, "and, in fact, from tomorrow you may double my order."
FOOTNOTES

1 Even this point is in question. Debate yet rages among some Bibfeldt scholars as to whether Bibfeldt's father drove a Mercedes, a BMW, a Honda Accord, or a VW Rabbit. The most recent argument for the Rabbit birthplace, presented for mass consumption and judgement in documentary film form, is presently showing in theatres nationwide. It details the tribulations of Frau Bibfeldt's lengthy labor and, featuring Joan Rivers in the starring role, is appropriately entitled Rabbit Test.

Other scholars yet debate Bibfeldt's birthdate. Was Bibfeldt born on All Saints Day in prefigurement of his future theological stance? Or was he in fact born late in the evening of October 31, Halloween? The argument for the October 31 date has been discredited largely due to another film presentation of the Bibfeldt birth-drama, this a poorly-conceived-and-produced, thinly-disguised allegorical attempt entitled Rosemary's Baby. Happily, the public was not fooled.

2 This essay was published in Idiot Wind, the Journal of Loquacious TV Meteorologists, June 1977. Incidentally, it is worth noting that another reason Bibfeldt liked this Scriptural text so well was that it precisely represented his theological positions in relation to the major philosophical and theological movements of the 20th century. In keeping with his motto of Respondeo Ergo Sum, Bibfeldt felt the need to respond accommodatingly to any philosophical or theological position with which he came into contact over the years, no matter how contradictory. To them all--
classical theological liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, social gospel, existentialism, process thought, liberation theology—he responded with cunning simplicity and foresight, "I am with you always, to the close of the age" knowing full well just how long that would be! The role of Bibfeldt in academic prophecy is one that cannot be covered here; suffice it to say that he has predicted that the title of Bernard McGinn's next book will be Have Pen, Will Travel. It will be a travel diary in which Prof. McGinn, during a year of trips to and from South Bend, Indiana, will attempt literal, allegorical, anagogical, and tropological analyses of drinking and fight songs of the construction crews of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris from the 11th century.

3 We will here pass over quickly in a footnote Bibfeldt's sure involvement with two recent films, Oh God! and Annie Hall. God as played by George Burns is a direct esthetic depiction of the doctrine of the relative quantitative similarity of God, a doctrine Bibfeldt developed in response to Barth's doctrine of the infinite qualitative distance of God. (Cf. "M" source). And at the outset of Annie Hall, Woody Allen quotes a joke that he mistakenly attributes to Groucho Marx, that he would never belong to a club that would have him as a member. This statement, in fact, is a description of Bibfeldt's own interaction with his contemporary theological communities; the phrase is taken from the recently-released biographical novel about Bibfeldt's life entitled A River Runs Through the Forbidden Forest, or why I never walk in dank, dark woods, co-authored by Mircea Eliade and Norman Maclean.
4 "L" source, p. 10. Let us note and remember Bibfeldt's fascination with things both three-in-one and vice versa. It proves to be a crucial point in his theories, both theological and pastoral.

5 Franz Bibfeldt, Gunfight at the OK Corral: a brief study in Transactional Marketing (Oklahoma City, OK: Okey-Dokey Press, 1972).

6 Since Bibfeldt frequently has difficulty finding a publisher for his ground-breaking works, he must often work through semi-respectable ghost writers. The public is thus forced to wait several years to find out what Bibfeldt is really thinking and then only receives it in watered-down form. E.g., Bibfeldt's seminal study on sado-masochism, whips, chains, and bondage as a form of "Primal Scream" therapy entitled The Agony and the Ecstasy.

7 Bibfeldt's duelling scar first led him to suspect an affinity with the "punk rock" movement, which itself affirms such actions of minor self-mutilation. Bibfeldt's reluctance to expose his scar, however, caused him difficulty in relating to the punk rockers. The one time that he did expose his scar, he tells us, "left him cold." He also had difficulties in assuming the punk rock look. As Bibfeldt tersely put it: "I used to have a crew cut, but the crew bailed out."

8 Here we need only note the Bibfeldt-inspired figure from the movie Saturday Night Fever, the priest-brother who had recently left the church behind for a life of secular ministry to the disco-theque. This character also seemed to have trouble refining his therapeutic technique, and left the disco post haste when the
fake fog began to spread across the floor, thinking that the room was being gassed.
BOTH THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT

Rev. Robin D. Mattison

Bethel Lutheran Church

July 16, 1978

Dear Friends in Christ,

During this last month, I have been vacationing all over the east coast, visiting family and friends I have not seen since I moved to Madison. One of the persons that I met for the first time was a cousin, about 37 years old, who is an economist. I told him that I was on my way to Washington, D.C. to participate with the Lutheran Church in America contingent at the rally for the Equal Rights Amendment. We fell into an intense conversation about my participation in the march, and his, for he was going, too. He saw himself as a kind of lone ranger ethicist, apart from any church, who mostly unsuccessfully, and at best frustratingly, was raising social concerns to the people he worked with. Now, he wanted to know, could I, could he, bear to be involved with social justices issues, when the odds were so much against their working out "in Justice's favor", as he put it? Even more specifically, if the Equal Rights Amendment failed, how would he have the energy to pursue any social justice issue again? And, he asked, how would I, as a woman, be able to continue to live with the weight of the nation saying that equality under the law could be abridged according to sex?

There was an intensity about his questions and a sadness about his self disclosure which said to me that the failure or success of the E.R.A had precipitated a crisis of meaning for him. He was on the verge of being burned out, an imminent casualty of a desire for justice.

The most serious questions he had for me, had to do with why I, who was as concerned about social justices issues as he, was not on the verge of exhaustion, was not planning to give up concerns about civil rights even if the E.R.A. was defeated. The question was a most appropriate one. To count back ten years in my own life, would have found me raising the same kinds of questions as I began my plans for the ministry. I, too, could not let any moment by to push whatever issue was alive for me at the moment, and certain events such as the killings on campus at Kent State, and Jackson State, and the invasion of Cambodia had the power over me to shake my Christian commitment in a major way. Such a situation was not true for me anymore. I began to think about why I wasn't saving the world singlehandedly anymore, and how I might communicate to him what had given me the strength to change. It was then I thought of my experience with a person of some renown, Dr. Franz Bibfeldt.

Dr. Bibfeldt is an imaginary Lutheran theologian created by the Rev. Dr. Martin E. Marty, an imaginative Lutheran theologian in his own right. Bibfeldt came into being at Concordia Seminary when Marty and his colleagues wished to discover whether their professors ever really read the footnotes at the bottom of the student's papers. Bibfeldt came forth as the author of a magnum opus known as "The Theology of Both/And"; alternately titled, "The Importance of All of the Above", and subsequently appeared in book
reviews, and was duly entered in the card catalogue. Marty and his cohorts risked expulsion for their activities, and it looked like dear Dr. Bibfeldt was destined for oblivion upon Marty's graduation. But, Bibfeldt was rediscovered in 1970 at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago where I was a student. Conferences and parties were held in his honor where his theological slogan "both/and" or a rousing "maybe" became known to all. Some said that Bibfeldt's rediscovery was occasioned by Marty's presence at the Divinity School, where this National Book Club Award winner did his teaching, but Bibfeldt's loyal following, of which I am one, would prefer to say that he always really did exist in the hearts of students of the Gospel, if not always in their minds.

Two of Bibfeldt's favorite Bible passages are those we read as Scripture today. In the epistle, the first 10 verses of Romans Chapter 13, Paul discusses Christian obligations to the governments that surround us, the civil authorities that make possible life in community. One is not to deride, Paul says, the structures that God offers to bring order and justice to all persons, Christian and non-Christian alike. At the same time in Matthew's Gospel, beginning at the 15th verse of the 22nd chapter, Jesus lets us know that he was concerned that we not set Caesar over against God, either. Jesus uses the denarius that the Pharisees hand him, as they try to trap him, as an occasion to expand their understanding of the obligation to civil government and to God. The Pharisees are expecting to catch him in being anti-Roman if he says no tribute is owed Caesar, or anti-Jew if he says that taxes are owed to Caesar. But Jesus turns the whole issue around, by responding in a way that Bibfeldt always loved, "Give, both to Caesar what is due Caesar, and to God what is due to God!" The Pharisees are taken by surprise and leave Jesus. They had expected "either/or" statements from Jesus about civil government. Judas had expected the same from the Lord: Either Jesus was to be Messiah-Revolutionary, or he was in some way against God's people. The high priest Caiaphas had the opposite expectations of the faith. Either one compromised with the occupying forces of Rome, or one couldn't save Judaism.

Bibfeldt meditated on these passages and was inspired to create the theology of "both/and". Jesus and Paul demonstrated for Bibfeldt four key relationships necessary for the faithful to understand: Both this world and the next, both Church and State, both sinful and righteous. (A fifth relationship had to do with Scripture itself. Bibfeldt offered the thought that believers were required to read both the chapter before the passage they were studying and the chapter after.)

The reaction to Bibfeldt, as Martin Marty records it, was both a strong and mixed one. There were many who were relieved to find "both/and" as part of the theology of the church. But others in the believing community were most uncomfortable. They professed a theology of "either/or" as central to the Good News. These persons stood for either law or gospel, either this world or the next, either sinful or righteous, America: either love it or leave it, either convert or be damned, either the church shall rule the state entirely, or the church shall have nothing to do with the state, either one is Christian or a politician, either fight in this war or stop calling yourself Christian! The points where people could be
upset were endless.

Bibfeldt in response to his readers hastened to assure them that there were both situations where "either/or" theology might be appropriate, and plenty of situations where it was a detriment to faithfulness. It was his observation that "either/or" theology tended to make people unhappy, anxious, defensive and frustrated because it posited life as a win/lose situation where one had to achieve certain status, viewpoints, life styles etc., before one was truly loved by God or anyone else. Life was a Darwinian competition to be the fittest; to marshal the most resources to one's cause, whatever that might be, with winning being the proof of righteousness.

I shared with my cousin that I saw him in the midst of the "either/or" struggle for fitness with his dividing line close to points of civil justice. In a way he was saying, "Either the E.R.A. passes or there is no justice". Because of this position, he was on the verge of departing from the realms of the committed into the realms of the apathetic. Not because he didn't want to be involved, but because the penalty was too high. The loss of the E.R.A. cause would be so intimately tied into a loss of personal worth, that there would be no safe area in his existence free from the threat of failure.

As we talked, I shared with him how Bibfeldt's theology of "both/and" had changed my conception of the church. The church had become for me the community where "both/and" is the realm of discourse, an arena for the blending of both the past experience of Israel with God, and the in-breaking of Christ's kingdom in the present moment in the interests of a holy future. A community where one attends to both the glamour and the terror of one's traditions. A community where all the traditional antagonists of creation: races, sexes, old and young, healthy and ill, educated and illiterate, are called together by a God who can be found in the symbols of all of them. I told him how the church in intercessory prayer offers petitions for both the seemingly clear cut issues of social justice and for the casualties to be found on both sides of the issue no matter what disposition is made of the central concern. I shared with him how my ministry to the pained and questing would remain the same whether the E.R.A. passed or not. Not because its passage isn't most important and to be supported by the church as it has been by the ALC and the LCA, but because new situations bring new casualties. The men and women who have been aggrieved before by lack of equality will switch places with those whose identities have been based in domination and subordination and who will feel pain on the E.R.A.'s passage. I shared with him the freedom one experiences in a community committed to the support of all persons where lone rangers, such as I had been, are seen as the lonely folk they are and offered the love and support needed for their compassion to prosper. I told him of the relief to be found in setting aside "either/or" win/lose definitions of self and task and be able to talk about social justice and pastoral care; the Union and the funeral. I did not disguise from him the slowness of the church's action on many issues, but I identified it as the result of wanting to minimize the casualties of change.
on both sides. He understood that, for he had been a casualty of his own desire for change.

My cousin listened carefully. A dialogue began. He did not return to the fold at that moment. I had not asked that, though I prayed for him. It would have been a violation of his integrity as a God-child to belittle his serious questioning with a "either come back to Jesus or else". But the seeds were sown on receptive soil; the denarius was seen both as Caesar's and as God's. A way to wholeness was pointed out, by virtue of the Bibfeldt humour. The comfort and strength of the believing community was identified: those who are willing for God's sake to point out the little murders of the human spirit that occur apart from any infringement of the law and the mass murders of human souls that occur with the law's permission.

Through the Gospel's power, I offered my cousin hope; the possibility of moving back from the intensity of seeing human decision-making as eternal and hanging forever on him. The possibility of being committed to the best of his energies and abilities without having one's soul, one's identity, being the wager on the outcome. The possibility of peace and health and joy within the midst of struggle for change.

I know he understood that much of what Bibfeldt was about. I know he understood the freedom of "both/and", the thoughtfully considered "maybe", over against the diatribes of right or left. My prayer is that it leads him to a faith which wants to let him be both believer and struggling with unbelief, both a critical lover and a loving critic, both committed and delighted.

I believe that's possible. For him, for me, for you. Luther knew it, as Bibfeldt did:

This life, therefore, is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise... This is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.

Martin Luther
FRANZ BIEFELDT AND PASTORAL CARE:
THE THEOLOGIAN OF THE DEAD

Otto Dreydoppel, Jr.
May 10, 1973
Theology has in recent years accepted the responsibility for responding to the situation of those who are oppressed: Blacks, the Third World, gays, women, Hamilton Jordan. Alongside all these discriminated-against minorities stands—or perhaps I should say, lies—a group which has in the past had few advocates. I refer, of course, to the dead, the true "Silent Majority" in Christendom.

Most of us became aware of the crying problem of the dead only late in 1975 when reports of the ongoing terminal mortality of Generalissimo Francisco Franco began to be widely circulated. With that the dead-consciousness movement was born. The movement has been concerned recently not only with trying to arouse its constituency, but also in the effort to gain passage of anti-discrimination ordinances in several large American cities. Alas, the deads-rights opponents have carried the day in Miami, St. Paul, where electorates were swayed by their emotional campaigns. In those cities the pro-life forces saturated the media with such slogans as "Would you want your child taught by a dead person?" and "They want to recruit us all!" The issue has even found its way into the pop music scene where an anti-dead-rights hymn called "Stayin' Alive" was for several months at the top of the charts. Another recent song has sought to make plain the groundlessness of prejudice against the dead by deliberately exaggerating it. This is, of course, the pop short "Dead People:"

Dead People got no reason,
Dead People got no reason,
Dead People got no reason
To Live.

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"Raising the Dead Consciousness: Up from the Grave and

..."Raising the Dead Consciousness: Up from the Grave and...
They got clammy hands
And glassy eyes.
They lie around.
Just drawin' flies.
They don't boogie much,
And they lie so low
You got to dig 'em up
Just to say hello.

Don't want no dead people
Round here.

This truly sums up the existential crisis of the dead.

Long before the current dead-consciousness movement, however, there was one man alive to the dead issue: Franz Bibfeldt.

Professor Bibfeldt has long been sympathetic to the problems of the dead. His doctoral work, you will recall, treats "The Problem of the Year Zero." This study of the radical contingency of temporal location is a perfect theoretical basis for ministry to those who have entered Eternity. Furthermore, Bibfeldt has distinguished himself as the theologian of the "Both/And," the insight that all things can be made to come out right, that nothing should be excluded, and that the scholar's task is to adapt so as to be relevant in every age and circumstance. According to Bibfeldt, it is therefore wrong to exclude someone from our field of concern merely because he or she happens to be dead. Dead people have serious problems which deserve to be addressed. Moreover, dead people themselves perfectly exemplify the Bibfeldtian method. Who, asks Bibfeldt, is better able to adapt to new conditions and to do so quietly and without fuss than the dead? Out of his continuing desire to please everyone, not just the living, and in gratitude to the dead for their adaptability to his system, Franz Bibfeldt therefore spent several of his most creative years seeking to devise a pastoral therapy suitable for ministry to the dead.

Bibfeldt first began the attempt to craft a system of pastoral care especially for the dead in the early 1950s when Rogerian counseling was
in vogue. On the advice of colleagues at the Universität Treblinka he sought out Rogers, and finally found the great non-directive counselor in a public television studio outside Pittsburgh. After several months of clinical training with Misterogors, Bibfeldt was ready to go public with his method of counseling the dead: "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood. Hi neighbor! Can you say "thanatology?" I thought you could!"

Back at Treblinka Bibfeldt soon learned that he had the wrong Rogers. He finally did meet the author of *Client-Centered Therapy*, and eagerly began to adapt the concept of reflective listening to the problem of ministry among the dead. Non-directive counseling, however, quickly proved to be ineffective with these clients. Bibfeldt discovered that while the dead make excellent Rogerian counselors—their ability to listen patiently is unexcelled—they somehow lack the necessary willingness to state their problems and provide the terms for meaningful counseling interchanges. Besides, none of the dead with whom Bibfeldt worked really ever had felt threatened by a directive pastoral counselor! Bibfeldt's project on pastoral care for the dead was to be dormant for another decade.

In April of 1966 *Time* magazine announced the death of God, and Bibfeldt's pastoral therapy was given new life. How better could one inspire faith and practice ministry among the deceased, he thought, than by constant reference to a Deity who was himself dead? The God-is-Dead theologians were, of course, only trying to make the point that God is wholly immanent. According to the Bibfeldtian both/and, however, this

2. Bibfeldt published an account of this experience as "Neighborhood Ministry in Forest Lawn," *Presbyterian Life After Death* XX (1953).
implied that God was also wholly transcendent. Dead people were therefore well in touch with this wholly transcendent God, since they too transcended time and place. Bibfeldt briefly considered suicide in order to facilitate his ministry among the dead in the name of a dead God, but cowardice prevailed, and the Master began to cast about for better therapeutic techniques.

At about that time pastoral counseling was being influenced by what has come to be known as the Human Potential Movement. These were the advocates of group-grope and encounter sessions, Transactional Analysis, and Transcendental Meditation, Arica, and est. This movement seemed promising to Bibfeldt in helping the dead get in touch with themselves. Dead people proved perfect clients for the Erhard seminars, since they were willing to sit still not for a mere twelve or sixteen hours, but for really long stretches of time. Unfortunately, few of the dead clients who participated in est "got it." Bibfeldt also discovered that his dead clients were unable to repeat a mantra, and TM had to be abandoned also. At first Transactional Analysis seemed to offer a most useful therapeutic technique. In all of his transactions with the dead Bibfeldt never found a single one who was not OK, which was a hopeful sign. But when it came to charting life scripts—or, in this case, death scripts—Bibfeldt found so little variety in the existence of his various clients that he gave up the effort, and moved on in his quest for the perfect therapy for the dead.

There was the brief promise of a new pastoral theology in the early 1970s with the emerging theology of future hope. The eschatological

theologians spoke of "the draw-of-the-future" and of the creative possi-
(but dead) to the theologians (see p. 337., infra) I wish to emphasize the "dead" of
bilities of a "God who is in front of us." Dead people, of course, have
nothing but future. And the idea of a "novum" which would break in
seemed perfectly suited for providing new meaning structures for the dead,

since their chief problem was one of boredom: nothing new ever happened.

The promise of future theology for the dead died, however, when Bibfeldt
confused future theologian Carl R. Raaten with rock star Johnny Rotten,
and said menacingly, "I won't listen to that punk!"

Professor Bibfeldt was much taken with the "Life After Life" movement
of the mid-1970s. Life-After-Lifers Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and Raymond Moody
detailed the experiences of those who, having been clinically dead, were
resuscitated and then were able to discuss the beauty of the afterlife:
brilliant colors, a feeling of wholeness and peace, and the presence of a
comforting "Being of Light." These people and their out-of-body experiences

convinced Kübler-Ross and Moody that life after death existed "beyond the
shadow of a doubt." If, reasoned the theologian of the both/and, there
is life after life, there must also be death after life. His resolve to
formulate a therapy of ministry for the dead was renewed.

At this point Bibfeldt sat down and began to think systematically
about the pastoral problems which ministry to the dead should meet. Beyond
the previously mentioned problem of ennui, of the awful sameness of the
day-in-and-day-out life of the dead, it occurred to Professor Bibfeldt that
dead people were extraordinarily prone to depression. This is not only
because of the loneliness and rejection they experience daily (dead people

4. Bumper stickers even began to appear which said: "Dead People Never
Have a Nice Day!"
are usually allowed to associate only with their own kind), but also because the dead are condemned to sedentary lives and are denied meaningful work, and therefore, any sense of accomplishment.⁵ This became abundantly clear to Professor Bibfeldt when he attempted to discuss with a late colleague what future work Bibfeldt could expect to see him produce.

"I'll resign," replied the dead friend. Professor Bibfeldt discovered that the dead suffer from incredible housing discrimination. They are, for the most part, consigned to small, dark, subterranean one-room apartments.

The problems of inadequate housing launched Professor Bibfeldt on a several months' study of what should be done with the remains of the dead. Burial was aesthetically unacceptable, and, besides, cemetery space was becoming more and more scarce. Bibfeldt searched the pastoral care literature, but found little of help there.⁶ Then while reading the Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead, Bibfeldt came across the insight that "The English never abolish anything, They put it into cold storage."⁷ This led Bibfeldt to consider dealing with the dead cryogenically, by quick freezing. Empathy has always been the keystone of Bibfeldt's life and work, however,⁸ and since he shivered at the thought of being frozen himself, he couldn't stand the idea of freezing anybody else, living or dead. The cryogenic option

5. One notable exception is the late King Tutankhamun, who, even in death, has proved to be expert at fundraising.

6. Most of the books he read had terrible plots.

7. This is the obligatory Whitehead citation for this paper.

8. It has been suggested that it is this trait which makes him so well suited to ministry to the dead.
Bibfeldt's final insight on the pastoral care of the dead. Since, according to Ms. Sheehy, one should develop coping mechanisms to face these crises, Bibfeldt sought ways for dead people to come to terms with the state of being dead. The professor then realized that the dead, merely by being dead are in fact already coping with their condition. The best therapy for the dead, therefore, is the advice of the nursery rhyme, "Leave them alone and they'll come home."

After the success of his book Bibfeldt threw himself with new vigor into the dead-rights movement. One of the churchly causes he became involved in was the demand for ordination of the dead. Since Mormons baptize the dead, he reasoned, why shouldn't the dead also be ordained? Not everyone agreed, however, and the ordination issue threatens to split the Episcopal Church. Likewise, Roman Catholicism, though it has shown admirable willingness to keep the dead alive through hagiography, shows little sign that dead Catholics soon will be ordained.

The rise of dead-consciousness has, inevitably, found dead people in the Evangelical wing of Christendom. They have, in fact, their own caucus within the Church Triumphant, usually referred to as "Died Again." Of this Bibfeldt, the affirmer of everything, is a charter member. Church growth has been spectacular among dead Evangelicals, since their evangelism techniques are highly refined. People join the "Died Again" movement literally

11. Professor Bibfeldt is still trying to come to grips with the problem of those who have been coerced into the ranks of the dead against their will. Many of these, especially young people, can be seen looing around on street corners selling flowers. Attempts at rescuing such unhappy dead have been, at this writing, inconclusive. One thinks, for example, of Sir Charles Chaplin and recent efforts of Missouri Fundamentalists to bring a deceased believer back to life. See Professor Bibfeldt's guide on de-programming, "Righteous Vampire."

10. It is clear that Franz Bibfeldt's pastoral theology didn't evolve rationally, it just grew like Thanatopsis.
minute-by-minute. But even among the mainline Churches the roll of dead members grows daily. 12

During the late 70s deadism has proved itself to be the most lively of issues. Franz Bibfeldt is now in his 82nd year and thus looks forward soon to joining the dead for whom he has been a faithful pastor. It is therefore fitting that Newsweek recently profiled him in a cover story. (I am sure that the existential source of his soul, which ultimately put his name on the cover.) Franz Bibfeldt has finally begun to receive the recognition he has long deserved as theologian of the dead.

(Subject to revision as I am moved by the Spirit. Or Franz.)

12. See Dying Churches Are Growing! Franz Bibfeldt's answer to Dean Kelley's gloomy study on the decline of the mainline churches. Here advances the "absolute value" theory of church growth: it doesn't matter whether your membership increases or decreases, as long as the numbers change.
Dyed-in-the-wool Died Againers are not, of course, content with Professor Bibfeldt's laissez faire pastoral therapy for the dead. Dead Evangelicals find more comfort in the charismatic psychotherapy propounded by Ruth Carter Stapleton usually referred to as "The Gift of Inert Healing."

Franz Bibfeldt leaves us finally with cautionary words about those stars of the Died Again movement who have become larger than life. These dead evangelists are media celebrities, and they tend to draw money and vitality away from local congregations. Their vehicles are such TV shows as PTL (that means, "pushing-up the lilies") and the 666 Club. By using space age electronics and technology these Died Again superstars become powerful beyond the range of mere mortal dead preachers. Beware, Bibfeldt warns us, of the BIONIC CHURCH!
THE FRANZ BIBFELDT FOUNDATION LECTURE FOR 1980

FRANZ BIBFELDT: THE BREAKDOWN OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE QUADRILATERAL MIND


These quasi-annual gatherings of the Franz Bibfeldt Society have become occasions to explore the unexplored dimensions of the great Bibfeldt's work. Indeed, so much of Bibfeldt's otherwise unknown work has been presented at these luncheons that the file of past lectures maintained in Mr. Marty's office gives new meaning to the phrase, "better left unsaid."

In keeping with this tradition, exemplified in Landon's "The Quest for the Historical Bibfeldt" and in Dreydoppel's essay on Bibfeldt's innovative methods of pastoral care for the dead, I, too, have endeavored to find an area of scholarship into which Bibfeldt has --- shall we say --- not yet intruded.

Given even a very low standard of academic quality, this was not difficult to do. Indeed, it took only a few minutes' reflection to spot the gaping hole in the literature. Though Franz Bibfeldt has been studied in these lectures biographically, historically, text critically, and even in terms of his implications for pastoral theology, no attention has been given to Bibfeldt's own psychological development. Indeed, apart from that unfortunate episode in the early 1930's, when Bibfeldt was --- shall we say, not to put to fine a point on it --- in residence at a little sanitarium near Basel, very little attention has been given to the dynamics of this unique mind.
Why this should be so is something of a mystery, for we have no shortage of authors in search of a project today, and psychobiography is --- as we say in the technical language of academic publishing --- selling like hotcakes. Erik Erikson's monumental study, *Gandhi's Truth*, fairly begs for a sequel titled *Bibfeldt's Uncertainty*. Bruce Mazlish interpreted the historical role of the leaders of great political movements in a thoughtful book titled *The Revolutionary Ascetic*. Surely the career of Franz Bibfeldt invites exploration in a companion volume titled *The Hesitant Hedonist*.

Lawrence Kohlberg has a method for studying moral development that relies heavily on test interviews that record a subject's response to a moral dilemma. Certainly Kohlberg should have something to say about the theologian of Both/And, about a man whose major work is *The Unrelieved Paradox*.

Consider one element of Kohlberg's interview protocol, the so-called Heinz dilemma. In this item, a subject is asked whether a character in a story should steal a drug from a selfish chemist in order to save his own wife from death. Bibfeldt's response to that would give new meaning to the word "equivocation."

I have uncovered one attempt to prepare a psychological study of Bibfeldt's development, however. Unfortunately, it failed due to what we may call "technical difficulties." Earlier this month I reproached my erstwhile teacher, colleague, and sometime collaborator, Jim Fowler, for failing to include Bibfeldt among the subjects for his faith development interviews. Fowler was properly chagrined over the omission, but he complained to me that he had tried to secure a record of Bibfeldt's faith development and failed. The problem was this: Fowler's faith...
development studies are based on a semi-clinical interview which records a subject's responses to a set of questions and which may last up to two hours. Fowler has at various times sent six interviewers to meet with Bibfeldt, but all of them fell asleep during the interview after conversations ranging from a maximum of 38 minutes to a minimum of four minutes and 27 seconds. The last interviewer was severely injured when he fell off his chair after $12\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, and further efforts to interview Prof. Bibfeldt have been suspended.

The root cause of all these failures should be apparent to anyone who has studied at the University of Chicago. Previous student's of Bibfeldt's psychology have failed not from lack of will nor from want of persistence. They have failed because they lacked a method. Before we can begin a proper study of Bibfeldt's consciousness, we require a methodological prologue, a historico-hermeneutic propaedeutic, a preface to any future scientific system of understanding the mind of this master of modern theological reflection.

Now before you all rush out and submit dissertation proposals on this topic to the Committee on Degrees, let me warn you that, I've already done it. In this publish or perish world, assistant professors are careful not to talk about problems that they haven't already solved --- and, I might add, careful not to solve a problem without talking about it. As one astute poet has put it:

The codfish lay 10,000 eggs,
The humble own but one ...
The codfish never cackles,
To show you what she's done.
And so we loathe the codfish,
While the humble hen we prize;
Which only goes to show you,
That it pays to advertise.

Now with that wise counsel firmly in mind, let us proceed.
I found the key to a psychological understanding of the work of Franz Bibfeldt while browsing in the writings of Julian Jaynes. Jaynes is a Princeton psychologist who recently wrote a book called The Origins of Consciousness and the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind. Most of you know from some undergraduate psych course or whatever that the human brain consists of two more or less discrete halves, which in ordinary consciousness function in tandem. The right brain, somewhat oddly, controls the left side of the body, and seems to handle the affective, intuitive, conceptual part of our thinking, while the left brain controls the right side, and busies itself with calculations, systems, logic, and problem solving functions. Crudely put, each of us has in his or her head a poet and an IBM executive, and somehow or other they get along well enough to keep us functioning.

All that is a psychological commonplace. Jaynes, however, makes it the center of a startling thesis. If ordinary consciousness results from the coordination of left and right brain functions, then human beings in fact were not conscious until quite recently. Right down into early historic times, Jaynes argues, the left and right brains functioned more or less independently, and the kind of coordination that today we achieve by intuition and imagination happened then much more directly and dramatically. The right brain would "speak" to the left. People in times of stress, crisis,
and decision did not think their ways through problems. They heard voices telling them what to do.

Now you see what Jaynes thinks he's done here. In one bold swoop he's explained the origins of religion and the voices of the gods. And he's explained why the gods stopped speaking and secularization set in. At some point in time --- Jaynes dates it precisely between the composition of the Iliad and the Odyssey--- the left and right brains got hooked together like they are hooked for us; people started to think like we think, the two-sided mind became unified in one consciousness, and the voices stopped. Hence "the origins of consciousness and the breakdown of the bicameral mind."

Now that was the clue that launched my study of the psychology of Franz Bibfeldt. Unlike the Freudian theories of Erikson or the Piagetian theories used by Fowler and Kohlberg, this was a formula that matched the data. Those who know Bibfeldt have often remarked that he seems to be barely conscious. Jaynes' theory leads to the exciting speculation that perhaps he isn't conscious at all. Might it not be the case that in the author of The Unrelieved Paradox and the theologian of Both/And, the left brain/right brain coordination that characterizes us 'ordinary mortals has broken down?"

Perhaps. But there is one problem with that hypothesis. When the gods speak, they tend to be pretty definite about their opinions and quite demanding about what they want. When Bibfeldt speaks, he equivocates. How could we use a theory that Jaynes uses to explain Socrates' demanding, commanding daimon to explain the theologian who answered Barth's thunderous Nein! with a little pamphlet called Vielleicht?
The answer, I think, lies in a proper appreciation of the psychological and physiological foundations of Bibfeldt's theology. This man who has tried so hard to please everybody and who has attempted throughout his career as author and teacher to affirm all propositions simultaneously, in the hope that some of them might be true, and a few of them might even be popular --- this man has obviously developed a specialized brain function that allows him to affirm a proposition with one part of his mind and deny it with another. Following the usual observation of his students and critics that Bibfeldt does all of his theologizing off the top of his head, we may identify the affirmation and negation functions of Bibfeldt's mind with the upper and lower brain, respectively.

Now you see how we arrive at an explanation of the theology of both/and. When Bibfeldt's unique functional separation of upper and lower brain is combined with the usual specialization of left and right brain, we get a four-fold division of labor in the head. The poet and the IBM executive are joined by a composer of TV jingles and a card sharp.

When the coordination between that little team breaks down, we get a return to the pre-conscious condition that Jaynes described: the breakdown of consciousness and the origins of the quadrilateral mind. And we get a reappearance of the oracular voices that Jaynes described. But with an important difference: when, as in Bibfeldt's case, that oracular right brain is further divided into upper and lower functions, a new phenomenon emerges. In Bibfeldt's case the gods not only speak; they bicker with each other.
It is evident, I trust, that the theological world must feel deep gratitude to Prof. Jaynes (and, of course, to me) for providing the clue that enables us to understand Bibfeldt's work. Those who have long stood in awe of the theologian's ability to hold two contradictory opinions in perfect unity, without distinction and yet without confusion, have compared the workings of his mind to that of a great ecumenical council. This, of course, is superstitious hyperbole — well-meant, but inaccurate. Scientifically considered, Bibfeldt's mind more closely resembles the workings of a small, but fractious, pastor-parish relations committee I once observed in the First United Methodist Church in Compton, Illinois.

Let us, then, push on to a further analysis of Bibfeldt's life and work according to the quadrilateral model I have proposed. (I wish to pass over for the moment the obviously frivolous suggestion that for easy reference we designate these quadrants with the names Joe, Jim, Trent, and Davey — after the members of the Sawdust Trail Quartet.)

One of the most important features of the quadrilateral model is that it not only helps us to understand the polarities, dualities, and paradoxes in Bibfeldt's systematic theology. It brings order to the apparent chaos in his personal life as well. We all know about Barth's fondness for the music of Mozart, and some of you may have heard of Bonhoeffer's penchant for 19th century Romantic German novels. Several investigators of the left-brain/right-brain hypothesis have suggested that interests like these, apparently unrelated to the professional work of the theologians, in fact provides a special sort of right-brain activity that lays an intuitive foundation for the systematic
work of the left-brain.

This is a fruitful suggestion for Bibfeldt work, too. But remember that with Bibfeldt we have to divide that right brain activity into upper right and lower right — and we have to expect a certain conflict between them.

For example, Bibfeldt is a philatelist, a stamp collector, in his spare time. He has, in fact, amassed one of Europe's finest collections of postage stamps featuring religious art. This collection would perhaps be more widely displayed at philatelic conferences, except for the unfortunate fact that the stamps in question are attached to one of Europe's largest and most complete collections of obscene post cards. It is not known whether Bibfeldt intended to collect the stamps and acquired the post cards as an afterthought, or vice-versa, but the theology of both/and has clearly crept into his leisure life as well.

I'm sure you wish, as I do, that we could explore these aspects of Bibfeldt's personal life at greater length — but I see that our time is coming to an end. I suppose it is true that theologically our time is always coming to an end, but at a Bibfeldt lecture that circumstance gives new meaning to the phrase, "not a minute too soon."

I suppose that the overall effect of this exploration of Franz Bibfeldt's psychology is, as always, to tell us something about ourselves — a circumstance that gives new meaning to the phrase, "I'd rather not know."

But it is true nonetheless. If in Christ we see ourselves reflected as it were in a glass, darkly, then in Franz Bibfeldt
we have an image of ourselves that is plain. When we look at Bibfoldt, the glass is perfectly clear, and we can see that it is we ourselves who are fuzzy around the edges.
During the early years of the United Nations, according to the "M" (Marty) source, "Bibfeldt gave the United States' U.N. Ambassador Warren Austin the suggestion that an Arab-Israeli dispute could be resolved if only the Arab delegates and Israeli delegates would come out with him into the hall to settle the affair." As this suggestion indicates, Bibfeldt has unusual insight into matters of diplomacy. Yet, strange as it may seem, a thorough investigation of Bibfeldt's influence in this area has not been undertaken before now. Perhaps it would be better if it never were undertaken. However, the one thing all of us as Bibfeldtian scholars have in common, is the insatiable desire to bring to light that which is better left in the darkness. With this in mind, I'm sure you understand why I must proceed.

Bibfeldt's political theory, as my title indicates, falls between that of autocracy and democracy. Autocracy may be described most accurately by Louis XIV's famous phrase "L'Etat c'est moi" (translated "I am the state"). Bibfeldt's problem with this must be obvious to everyone. A diplomacy based upon "L'Etat c'est moi" could be hard for everyone else to live with. Democracy, on the other hand, may be characterized by the phrase "L'Etat c'est nous" (translated "We are the state"). As Bibfeldt has pointed out countless times, too often this, in reality, becomes "We, over against everyone else, are the state". Bibfeldt's political theory, as we shall soon enough see, is best represented by the phrase "L'Etat c'est tout le gratin" (translated "Everybody that is anybody is the state").

Protagoras, the Sophist, taught that "Man is the measure of all things". Democratic theory is philosophically rooted in this statement. Autocracy, however, is philosophically rooted in Plato's reply to Protagoras.
that "God is the measure of all things". In autocratic theory, of course, the state is God. When Bibfeldt was asked which of these two political philosophies, autocracy or democracy, he preferred over the other, he replied:

Some of my friends live in democracies and prefer them to autocracies, and some of my friends live in autocracies and prefer them to democracies. As for me, I stand with my friends.

Because democracy and autocracy are diametrically opposed to one another, Bibfeldt sought to find a via media, a middle course. This arises out of his intense belief that no two issues are ever so far apart that they can't be straddled. "When any theologian worth his salt comes to the parting of the ways," writes Bibfeldt, "he goes both ways." Therefore, he set about developing a political theory large enough to include both autocracy and democracy, and act as a bridge between them. First, Bibfeldt realized that he must apply the guidelines of his Bullgeschichte hermeneutic and analyze the word "politics" in order to understand what was meant by so ambiguous a term. The first step of this process was to break the term into its components. "Poli". Of course; that means "many". Becoming excited, feeling that he was really on a roll, Bibfeldt discovered that "tics" meant "local and habitual spasmodic motions of particular muscles". Does not that describe international relations? Obviously, by way of his hermeneutic, Bibfeldt got immediately to the root of the problem in all politics. Too many muscles habitually and spasmodically motioning in various locales. Wouldn't it be better, he reasoned, to have just one muscle habitually and spasmodically motioning in various locales? Nations cannot expect to see eye to eye when they are looking down upon one another's muscles. In order to reflect the meaning of his solution to the problem, Bibfeldt called his political theory "unitics", as "uni" connotes one.
Rather than Protagoras' "Man is the measure of all things", or Plato's "God is the measure of all things", Bibfeldt decided that the keynote phrase of his unitics theory should be a statement philosophically true to both autocracy and democracy; he came up with the phrase "Hindsight is the measure of all things". This reflects the fact that a unitics statesman is one who possesses the ability to foretell what will happen tomorrow, next month, next year, -- and to explain afterwards why it did not happen.

Bibfeldt further centered his theory around the text Ecclesiastes 4:11 which reads: "So if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one alone keep warm?" The failure of autocracy and democracy to successfully lie together in the unitics bed, Bibfeldt later reasoned, was the chief cause of the cold war.

In this realistically conceived idealist posture, that of autocracy and democracy lying together keeping one another warm, world leaders would be able to drive world opinion in much the same way Bibfeldt used to drive his old mule. In his words: "In order to keep up the appearance of being the driver, I had to watch the way he was going and follow closely." International relations carried on in this way, according to Bibfeldt, would eliminate national rivalries and all diplomacy would move as one giant muscle motioning habitually and spasmodically in various locales.

As an international traveller, it is only natural that Bibfeldt should want to lecture internationally about his unitics theory. He set off to do just that in the early thirties. His advance man billed him as "Franz Bibfeldt: the unitics theory spokesman." Since, after a stop in his beloved adopted homeland of Switzerland, the tour was to take him first to France and then to Quebec in Canada, the advance billing was done in French. It read: "Franz Bibfeldt: l'unitics théorie porte-parole."

A slight misunderstanding developed in which Swiss authorities became
concerned when they mistranslated the advance billing to read "Franz Bibfeldt: a lunatic theory spokesman". Upon his arrival, Bibfeldt was promptly placed in residence at a little sanitarium near Basel. He was forced to remain for a little more than a year. This ended, rather prematurely, the international lecture tour. However, it did inspire him to write an informative non-theological treatise dealing with the subject of unexpected leisure time entitled *Suntan Compound.*

During the summer of 1948, an acquaintance of Bibfeldt's from his year at the sanitarium contacted him about an opportunity to lecture at the Annual Kamikaze Pilots Alumnist Dinner in Tokyo, Japan. Because of his already much publicized interest in the Pastoral care of the dead, Bibfeldt readily accepted. The lecture he delivered to his grave listeners eventually grew into his book entitled *Die Sprache auf der Widerspruchsgeist* (*Diction in the Spirit of Contradiction*). In that classic work, Bibfeldt describes unities diplomatic phraseology:

> If you were to say to a homely woman, "your face would stop a clock", that would be uncomplimentary and utter stupidity. However, if you said to her, "When I look into your eyes, time stands still", that would be an excellent example of unities diplomacy.

In still another work, found left behind after his 1970 visit to the Playboy mansion, entitled *Unities: Between Two Impotent Political Theories,* Bibfeldt briefly mentions an informative exchange between himself and Reinhold Niebuhr in which Niebuhr credits Bibfeldt with influencing him to view things realistically. The exchange of letters between the two theological giants reads as follows:

> Dear Franz,

> As you know, I have long been an admirer of your work. When, in 1930, I first heard your unities theory, I was deeply impressed by the clarity you brought to such a difficult subject. In the fourth chapter of my own book, *An Interpretation of*
Christian Ethics, published in 1932, I used a phrase of yours ("impossible possibility") to describe both the relevance of love in the human community, and at the same time, point to its difficulties.

You also helped me to realize that neither democracy nor autocracy should be considered as either saintly or demonic; this realization has figured prominently in my work ever since.

Your theology of both/and is obvious even in many of my book titles: The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, Pious and Secular America, etc. I apologize for not crediting your influence in print, but as you may realize, Americans are somewhat skeptical of German theologians.

Affectionately and with great respect,

Reinhold

Dear Reiny,

Thank you for your kind letter. It gives me the opportunity to remind you to give idealism the same fair shake you always give to realism. Remember, a good theologian has much in common with the mugwump; he should sit on a fence with his mug on one side and his wump on the other.

Sincerely,

Franz

In trying to determine what measure of influence Bibfeldt has had upon Jerry Falwell, I realized that to get the entire story I would have to spend eye-popping-er, I mean, eye-pooping hours researching in the Penthouse archives hoping to turn up valuable historical evidence placed there as a result of the recent Penthouse interview with Falwell. My research did not go unrewarded. I found some good historical stuff as well.

My work at Penthouse uncovered the fact that Falwell has been deeply influenced by Bibfeldt's hermeneutic of reversism. As the P source (Price) discovered, Bibfeldt developed this hermeneutic in order to balance the one sided nature of the sayings of Jesus. According to Bibfeldt: "Reversism operates as follows: Any saying which is too hard to understand ... is to be understood to mean the opposite of what it literally says." Falwell has found this hermeneutic particularly useful in understanding the sayings
Jesus that happen to have political implications, as the following exchange between Falwell and Bibfeldt illustrates.

Dear Franz,

Your hermeneutic of reversism is the only higher critical method that enables me to read the politically oriented words of Jesus the way I believe they should be read. Therefore, it must be of God.

In my appreciation of your profound work, I am sending you your own copy of the Giant Print Faith Partner King James Version of the Holy Bible. I am confident that you will be most anxious to pledge the ten dollars a month necessary to become a full-fledged faith partner in our ministry. It is considered a tax-deductible donation.

Living in His Will,
Jerry

Dear Jerry,

As a non-American, I do not pay taxes. Therefore, I have no reason to donate to your "Immoral Minority" (as determined by the guidelines of my reversism hermeneutic) organization. However, I have autographed your faith partner Bible and am returning it under separate cover. You can sell it for a fortune at the University of Chicago Divinity School annual booksale. Just get it into the hands of Joe Price, who I believe is a permanent resident of Swift Hall. He will do right by you.

Sincerely,
Franz

Currently, Bibfeldt is working on two new works in the area of international relations. The first, soon to be released, is a study of the world wars entitled Sacred Tournies. The second is a book through which he is trying his hand at Haigiology. It is a book about the present Secretary of State, the new so-called "patron saint of democracy".

We have now traced the development of Bibfeldt's political theory and looked briefly at its impact. In closing, I offer the following:

Si monumentum requiris, circumspice (If you seek his monument, look around you).
Those of us who have both followed and led the career of Franz Bibfeldt, who have both respected and dispised, both read and ignored, his work, are both appreciative and saddened by your appearance here today, yesterday and tommorrow. We both thank and feel that both anything and everything (and even nothing) which brings both greater fame and infamy to our beloved Bibfeldt is to be both cherished and disregarded. In both the long and the short of it, therefore, we mark say both thanks and no-thanks.

It is the custom that great men of the academy are often honored by the publication of a festschrift—and so it is that those of us who have stood in awe of the achievement of Franz Bibfeldt have a place in this program.

The publication of the festschrift has been an extremely difficult task because the relief paradox requires, of course, that virtually all positions and perspectives be included. Yet, with the current state of the publishing industry, no published was willing to take on that task. In other words, we were in need of the utilization of the relief paradox itself. We really are quite proud of the results of our efforts. We have contributions from, in the arts: Sir Walter Scott, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Wordsworth, Robert Browning, Jonathan Swift, Robert Burns, Verdi, Kipling, Byron, and King Lear. From the world of the bench we have contributions from Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Bandel: from politics: Prime Minâînister William Gladstone, President James Buchanan, Aaron Burr, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, Winston Churchill and President Warren Harding. Our only regret was that we could not get a theologian to make a contribution. Yet with all these contributions we have a book of exactly 150 pages.
So at this time it gives me great pleasure to present to you a festschrift in honor of Franz Bibfeldt—requesting that you give it to him whenever you see him next.

The title—as I uncover the original copy—is appropriate more to Bibfeldt's character than to the many subjects to which he was drawn—but better we capture the husk than the essence (to recall Bibfeldt's own response to Harnack), THE SENSUOUS DIRTY OLD MAN, which in its own way is not so much a paradox but undoubtedly a relief.
"There's No Business:"
Franz Ribfeldt and Alternative Careers for the A.R. in Collision
in Show Business

by
Cleon Rolland

for
the 1963 Spring Franz Ribfeldt Festival

March 21, 1963
What can we say about Franz Bibfeldt that hasn't been said already? Theologian, scholar, pastor, social critic, biblical exegete, orthopedic shoe salesman – Franz Bibfeldt has been all these and more. How may we properly pay tribute to a man who has called the theology of Kierkegaard "nothing that a month in Acapulco wouldn't cure?" A man who has defined the union of religion and psychology as "a process wherein God tells us we're O.K. and He's the All-Being Creator of Time, Space and Dimension?" A man who regards the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas as "the finest product of the finest mind of medieval church history, and about as exciting as a turtle race?"

But let us turn to the tribute paid to Franz Bibfeldt by his colleagues. Jerald Brauer once wrote, "I consider Franz Bibfeldt the finest mind of our generation because he always wants to see photographs of my grandchildren." Martin Karty, "the man who found the fun in fundamentalism," has said, "Prof. Bibfeldt has been my inspiration in everything I've ever done, except buying a Nehru jacket in 1967; I don't know what inspired me to do that."

Today we are to discuss Franz Bibfeldt and alternative careers for the Ph.D. in religion. Of course, this is a subject of purely academic interest to those of us attending the Divinity School. We, after all, were attracted here by the ads in the back of Christian Century, showing Jim Lewis in a gorilla suit saying, "If I don't get you a good teaching job in a world-class university, I'll eat the entire Church Dogmatics!" The Divinity School's record for placing its graduates is so good that next year Dean Gamwell plans to institute
the policy of "A Job Upon Graduation or Double Your Tuition Back."

But there are others less fortunate who face a difficult job market, and upon this subject, as upon so many others, the same words of Franz Bibfeldt are to be heeded.

Our particular interest will be alternative careers for the student of religion in show business. I must confess to a personal interest in this subject since for several years before beginning my graduate studies, I was a television writer and certainly not what show people call "the business." Bibfeldt has always been keenly aware of the close association between religion and the entertainment industry. As he wrote in "Comforting Thoughts for Those Waiting Tenure:" "Every pastor who preaches has something of the actor in him, every scholar of liturgics has something of the stagehand in him, every professor who supervises a Ph.D. dissertation has something of the dog-trainer in him."

The sources for Bibfeldt's dicta on the study of religion and show business are many. Apart from his major opus on the job search, What Color Is Your Parasol, he has written a series of articles for the Cambridge Journal of Philosophy in India, the Revue des Petites Études Bibliques, the Zeitschrift für Verblendete Theologie, and TV Guide. To those who are concerned with methodology, I hasten to assure you that I shall steer a middle course in dealing with these texts. I shall neither seek to go "behind the text" nor remain "before the text," but will rather stand "beside the text," treating it as a friend and equal whose opinion I may or may not seek. This is of course Bibfeldt's own approach. As my justification I cite his
remark to Langdon Gilkey at a recent Very Important Theologians' Snack: "Text, shmext! Doesn't anyone read books anymore?"

Franz Bibfeldt was drawn early to show business in the form of the theatre, when his father took him to a production of Oscar Wilde's Salome when he was fourteen. He noted his reactions in his diary:

"The anguish of knowing that the life of John the Baptist hung in the balance was second only to the thrill of seeing Salome's 'Dance of the Seven Veils.' Fraulein Schmidt, who played Salome, in a fine big girl and an excellent dancer. You'd never know from listening to Pastor Vogel's sermons that religion could be so exciting." Thus were born two of young Franz' keenest interests, and religion was soon to become a third.

At university, Franz took an active part in student dramatics, topping his undergraduate career with the lead role in Charley's Aunt. This part won him the first of many academic awards, when his fellow students elected him Queen of the FAY. He became interested in the cinema as a graduate student. After seeing Intolerance in 1925, he wrote: "Historians of religion tell us that all drama arose from the narration of tribal myths around the communal campfire. The psalms seem to reflect some drama of conflict between the God Jahwah and the chaos monster, resulting in Jahwah's enthronement as King of Creation.

European theatre began in passion plays performed outside cathedrals. So why won't Momma let me go to the burlesque in KönigFriedrichStrasse?"

While on the faculty of Union Theological Seminary, Bibfeldt was inspired by the many overtly religious plays presented on the New York stage, including Green Pastures and Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral.
It was always Bibfeldt's opinion, however, that all theatre would benefit from the inclusion of religious themes and concerns, and that it is the responsibility of the student of religion to assist the playwright when necessary with emendations to the text—excuse me, play. He put his theory into practice while serving as faculty advisor to the two theatrical groups at Union, the Protestant Players and the Theatre Guild of St. Jude the Obscure. He was always careful, however, to ensure the "religious" additions were in keeping with the time and spirit of the original play. Thus, in his production of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, two soldiers spent the night before the Battle of Agincourt comforting themselves with the mystical insights of Meister Eckhardt. Paul Tillich himself appeared as a walk-on character in Bibfeldt's version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* to explain Stanley Kowalski's existential alienation from God to a skeptical Blanche Dubois. Tillich did it as a personal favor to Bibfeldt, whom he always affectionately referred to as "that noodlehead." Tillich later admitted that appearing on stage not only tested the dynamics of his faith, but it had shaken his foundations a bit as well.

Unfortunately, Bibfeldt's flirtation with adding spiritual dimensions to popular drama was curtailed by the shortsightedness of certain playwrights and archaic copyright laws, and he was forced to pursue new interests. He soon investigated the part religion had to play in other sorts of entertainment, but his first love has remained the theatre. He recently published a paper finding echoes of fertility rites and virgin sacrifice in the Rockettes and other theatrical
displays of feminine pulchritude. His remark that "the lightheartedness of Forty-Second Street is just another manifestation of sacred constitution" earned him the admiration of fellow scholars and a stiff letter from David Herrick's attorneys.

Clearly, then, we may see from Franz Bibfeldt's own example that the Ph.D. in religion has much to offer the theatre, and indeed all aspects of show business. Bibfeldt's conviction that this is so is a result of the deep influence of Marxism upon his thought. Although originally hostile to Marxism in the early thirties, by 1939 Bibfeldt saw it as the only way out of the crisis which was to become the Second World War. I know that to associate a scholar of Prof. Bibfeldt's stature with Marxism is to degrade him in the eyes of some, but as Bibfeldt himself put it, "I must bow to the dictates of my conscience. Both my mind and my heart tell me that Marxism is the only hope for the future of comedy, although Chico and Harpo are pretty good too. Zeppo? Hooey. Couldn't even sing."

This remark underlines the importance that Prof. Bibfeldt attributes to comedy, and anyone who has read much of Bibfeldt's work will agree that there is a fine line between the study of religion and comedy. As he said in a career seminar in Berkeley in 1973, "You show me someone who wants to spend a lifetime studying the Council of Trent and I'll show you a clown." All of us who study religion are aware that there are elements of the ridiculous as well as the sublime, especially if you have to learn Akkadian or Sanskrit. Of course, we also know that it is not right to make fun of anyone's religion, not even that of Ernest Angley or the people we read about...
in Prof. Reynolds' class on religious communities. However, Bibfeldt has pointed out that comedy is a way of "sugar-coating" serious social criticism, as we may see by the examples of Lenny Bruce, Richard Pryor, and Steve Martin, whose comedy will earn you more serious social criticism than anything else you can think of. Comedy may thus provide a vehicle for serious religious discussion. Bibfeldt has shown that the greatest of religious teachers used this technique, as we may see in his articles including "The Lord of Laughter: Christ as Comedian," "The Power of the Boffo One-Liner in the Thought of Confucius," and "The Buddha: One 'Wild and Crazy Guy?'

In the same way, Bibfeldt sounds the call for the modern student of religion to use comedy to impart his or her message to the untutored masses. "The simplest religious truths become more easily grasped by the lay person when expressed in humorous terms," Bibfeldt wrote in "Pearls Before Swine: Great Religious Insights for the Uninitiated." 

"Which remark bears more impact: 'God is ubiquitous' or 'God is so ubiquitous that when He sits around the house, He really sits around the house?' The student of religion must somehow learn to combine the hair shirt and the Borscht Belt."

Of course, when most of us think of show business, we think of television, the Muzak in the dentist's office of life. There can be no doubt that religion is a mainstay of contemporary television programming, but the mainline denominations — those that don't practice snake-handling — are not well represented. Franz Bibfeldt has discussed this problem on a number of religious television programs, from "ABC's Wide World of Krishna" to "Monday Light Haddish," but
since these shows were all aired between one and five in the morning, his views have not received the attention they deserve. As he said last August on "Methodists Look At The News," "the capacity of television for disseminating information is enormous, and it is the responsibility of religious professionals — academics, pastors, bartenders — to exploit it to its fullest capacity. The time has come for religious quiz programs." His suggestions for such programs included "Leap of Faith," in which contestants climb up Jacob's ladder by means of empirical evidence for design in the natural world before making the "Leap of Faith" across the chasm of despair to the postulation of a beneficent divine Creator. Another suggested program was "Son Faster," a quiz in which the winner is the first contestant to stop attempting to answer the questions. Bibfeldt was also instrumental in the creation of the short-lived quiz show sponsored by the Catholic archdiocese of Chicago, "Let's Have a Novena," in which contestants committed themselves to various devotions in exchange for cash prizes, pilgrimages and various indulgences. The members of the audience would dress as their favorite saints, but a nasty incident arose when the eagle of a St. John the Divine attacked the greyhound of a St. Ferdinand III of Castile, and the host, Fr. Lonty, was soon reassigned to a leper colony in General.

Of course, where the Ph.D. in religion can make his greatest impact is in shaping the minds of the younger generation. An effective medium for this task is children's television. In a speech to the 1979 graduating class of Cecolampadius Institute in Buffalo, Bibfeldt asked, "How many of you are here today because of Captain
Holland: Bibfeldt – page eight

Kangaroo's daily admonition to say your prayers? How many first gained a sense of the falleness of man through the brutality of 'Tom and Jerry'? How many first appreciated the 'banality of evil' by means of the adventures of Clutch Cargo? Yet today, the novels of children's television are content to entertain with puppets and cartoons about shapes, colors and the alphabet. Bert and Ernie are all very well, but they don't bring us any closer to solving the riddle of existence, do they?" This question poses a challenge to all of us who are students of religion, a challenge to bring to the children of America the benefits we enjoy in studying religion: the happy hours spent among the archives of obscure denominations, the sense of accomplishment when you've carried a theological point to its logical conclusion and beyond, the joy of mastering a language no one has spoken for two thousand years, the status of being the world's leading authority on Schwankfelder hymnody. In this, as in so many other cases, Prof. Bibfeldt has led the way with his own practical example. It was not long ago that he paid a visit to Mister Rogers' "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" where he had a long discussion with the hand-puppet King Friday the Thirteenth about the problem of Job. An unfortunate accident with a high power cable led to the tiny puppet's wooden head exploding, the puppeteer breaking his leg, and Prof. Bibfeldt's hair going Afro from a 20,000-volt electrical charge. As Fred Rogers himself said at the time to his horrified viewers: "Did you like the way Prof. Bibfeldt lit up? Can you say 'electro-convulsive shock'?"

There is much more we could say about Prof. Bibfeldt's own
Holland: Bibfeldt — page nine

contributions to the world of show business: his justification for
"My Mother the Car" based on the theory of reincarnation in the
Tibetan Book of the Dead; his brilliant analysis of the evolution of
Thai Buddhism based entirely on one production of The King and I;
his part as spiritual advisor to the cast and crew of Monty Python's
Life of Brian; and his contributions to a forthcoming Broadway musical
based on Richard Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. What is more
important is what you and I, as people trained in the various disci-
plines devoted to the study of religion, will do to help others gain
a better insight into their own and humankind's spirituality. This
is a sacred duty which we must not shirk — unless, of course, we find
academic positions instead.

I would like to conclude this essay as I began it, with a personal
note. While I was studying at Oxford I chanced to meet Prof. Bibfeldt
in the Bodleian Library, where he was researching a book about the
Oxford Movement and its influence on the British incense and candle
industry. I spoke to him not only about my respect for his massive
contribution to scholarship, but also of my own ambitions. When I
finished, he flashed me a kindly smile and said something I would
like to share with all of you as a parting thought. "Remember," he
said, "no matter what wealth may come to you, it is easier for a rich
man to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a camel to...
than it is for a camel to."
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AN EXEGESIS OF

FRANZ BIBFELDT'S

THE FOOD CONTEXT OF PASTORAL CARE

Dale Richesin
year has been a busy one for Bibfeldtian scholars. Scholars of
the post-modern Bibfeldtian age, have not been content to
be important issues of the past: issues that I am sure you
the existential problem of the year 0, the interpretative
both/and theory, as well as the very important work in the
of bullreschichte. These problems have certainly laid the basis
on research in the past. In this year, we have seen many new
areas as well as the emergence of Bibfeldtian scholarship
challenging areas beyond those originally set down by the great
us movement. Franz Bibfeldt has now broadened his theology into
as. His basic appeal at present is to a broader, more secular
the heels of Lawson Gilkey’s latest work, Reaping The Whirlwind
be pleased to see the epic film produced by Franz Bibfeldt and Assoc-
As With The Whirlwind” which will be released this August. The hit
gle from that movie is already receiving some airplay, “Blowing In
nd.” The disco version, however, “Staying Alive In The Whirlwind”
uch more popular acclaim.
y far the most important development of the past year among the post-
feldtians is the development of a Bibfeldtian concept of pastoral care.
ngs of Franz on this subject have just recently been catalogued, although
ly, all are now out of print. Being a true scholar, I checked the circu-
nartment at Regenstein only to find that all the volumes of this valuable
n had been checked out to a boldly scrawled, “M. Marty.” Undaunted, I
the LITC Library only to discover the same thing. At this point I made
of the Bibfeldtian bibliography on pastoral care and set about to apply the
ian hermeneutic (“bullreschichte”) to a study of the titles of this newly dis-
out as yet unread, collection. (A footnote here, I understand that in the
Bibfeldt will, this important collection is being left to the Divinity School
Society, otherwise called Limen Lovers, Anonymous, as soon as they can
locate the collection.)

The first item in this bibliography that caught my eye was an article published in the *Rhinelander Quarterly*, April, 1961, entitled, "Pastoral Care and the Problem Drinker." The article was 2 2/3 pages long and began on page 26. This being all the information that I could gather from the bibliography, I began to work back from the text as it were, to discover the article behind the text. I checked the index to that particular issue of *Rhinelander Quarterly* and discovered that the article behind the text was an article published by a certain B. Brown entitled "Pastoral Care and the Problem Pizza." I was able to find a copy of this article about a week ago crumpled under my seat at the Medici. Fascinated by this find, I began to read it with anticipation. The article was essentially a condensed version of a longer paper entitled "The Problem Pizza and the High Church," (an ecclesiological study which partially meets the requirements for the D.Min. degree). This article contained little that was useful in the area of pastoral care except for a footnote of another title that was in the Bibfeldtian bibliography on pastoral care. This item was a book entitled *The Food Context of Pastoral Care*, published in 1976 by the Browning and Brown Publishing House of Bangkok, India, edited by B. Mahan. After glancing over the rest of the items in the Bibfeldtian bibliography on pastoral care, I quickly discovered that this book was central to the bibliography. Having discovered the existence of this valuable text, although not having yet read it, I set about to understand it through the basic Bibfeldtian hermeneutic of bullgeschichte.

According to this hermeneutic, Bibfeldt goes back to scripture for an understanding of the true nature of the pastoral care of Jesus. The increasing doubt that the modern age has placed on the miracles of Jesus has demanded a new understanding of his true pastoral abilities. Modern medicine has cast questionable
Glances as to the ethics of the healings of Jesus. So if you take away the validity of the healing miracles, what is left? A few cliches which were the bulk of his teachings, and his food miracles. If one looks closely at the accounts of Jesus in relationship to food, an understanding of the true nature of his pastoral activities becomes apparent. The first miracle occurs at the wedding feast at Cana. Anyone who has run low on wine during a party, or a sherry hour knows the danger of unsatisfied guests. Jesus's miracle at this point was a sincere act of pastoral care to the host of the feast. Although most people cast serious doubt as to the validity of the miracles of the feeding of the 4000 and the feeding of the 5000, anyone who has cooked for more than five people, (say a luncheon of some sort) knows what a miracle it is when everyone is finally fed, and how easy it is to have many baskets of food left over. Not only is food seen as important to the pastoral care context of the ministry of Jesus, but it reflects upon his personal life as well. When told of the illness of Lazurus and the illness of the magistrate's daughter, did he rush immediately to their side to heal them. No, he waited around to collect a few meals that people owed him. An early drawing of Jesus that was recently unearthed in Samaria that dated back to the first century indicated that it was most probable that Jesus weighed from 180 to 240 pounds, was about 5'6", and contrary to tradition, did not sport a beard, but was clean shaven and slightly balding. Food was obviously very important to the ministry of Jesus. In the command of Jesus to his disciples concerning their mission activity, he instructed them 'to stay at one house before you leave a village.' His reference of course was to the importance of adapting to the cuisine of a particular location rather than changing quickly from one type of food to another. If received poorly in any village, in other words, if the food was not adequate, 'one should shake off the dust of that village.'
The food context of pastoral care of Jesus clearly draws upon a similar emphasis in the Jewish tradition. The strict dietary laws of the Jewish people indicates the importance of their concern for this aspect of life. The ancient Semitic root for the word Rabbi comes from the word rabbitar which means great eater. The rabbinic school arose not, as usually understood, as a school of scholars and teachers of the old tradition, but as great hosts of the banquet. Their knowledge of all the particular details of the dietary laws gave them much authority in the Jewish community. This stature in the community was later broadened to include more general authority over morality, history, and the heritage. In the Jewish tradition a great emphasis is placed on the feasts and banquets that mark various holidays. This is only natural since the authorities who preserved these traditions, the great eaters, placed much emphasis on the pastoral care aspect of food in the community.

At the time of Jesus the Jewish rabbinic tradition had lost its rabbitaric emphasis. His general ministry was an attempt to recover this tradition of the rabbitars, the great eaters. His fame as a rabbitar was widespread. While dining with a famous publican, he was anointed with oil and his feet were washed in ointment as a sign of his authority over the banquet. When he was not received which such acclaim he rebuked his host for failing to acknowledge him as a great eater. The most original teachings of Jesus were those that reflected food imagery: the parable of the mustard seed, the leavened bread, the sower, the master of the vineyard, the great catch of fish, the fig tree, etc. In Matthew, Jesus speaks of himself as "opening my mouth in parables," indicating the metaphoric parallel between food and wisdom. In John, the imagery becomes even more apparent. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." This passage foreshadows the eucharist in junction to 'eat of the flesh and drink of the blood of Christ.' The imagery
of the church is also cast in terms of food, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." The believers are referred to as the 'salt of the earth and the light of the world.'

The feast of the last supper has always been regarded as a central and important point in the Christian tradition. The service of the Last supper is one of the few elements of the worship that is incorporated in almost all churches of the Christian tradition. The love feasts of first century Christianity show how important the early church regarded the celebration of this feast. Jesus's command to 'eat of my body and drink of my blood' was taken seriously. This literalistic enthusiasm is probably much closer to the actual teaching of Jesus than the vitamin pill wafers and half shot of cheap wine or watered down Welch's grape juice that typifies so many of the modern celebrations of this feast.

In the post-Ressurection appearances of Jesus, food once again becomes an important symbol. We have seen how important food was to the whole ministry of Jesus. Food became a symbol that indicated even the presence of Jesus. Food became a paradigmatic motif of grace. In the Luke account, Jesus appears to the disciples outside of the town of Emaus. He walks with them into town, but they do not recognize him. He finally reveals himself to them and they touch his wounds, but they still do not believe. In desperation, he asks them for a piece of broiled fish and begins to eat with them. They finally recognize him as their Lord, and bow down to praise him. In the gospel of John, Jesus appears on the shore while the disciples are fishing in a boat on the lake. He tells them where to cast their nets and they haul in a great catch. As they come to shore, Jesus is cooking breakfast for them, and their eyes are opened and they recognize him. He then gives them the missionary charge to go into the world in the simple phrase, "Feed my sheep."
We see, according to Bibfeldt, the importance of food in the pastoral care context of the ministry of Jesus. Theologically, we see in Bibfeldt, a discovery of profound importance. The food context of Jesus's ministry reflects both a scriptural and a common human experience basis for faith. Separated for centuries, these two sides of the Christian tradition have finally been brought together in the thought of our own Franz Bibfeldt. For Bibfeldt, this rabbinic tradition has been preserved in the modern church through a matriarchial tradition of church suppers, picnics, food baskets to the needy, and bake sales. The patriarchial structure of the church has preferred to think of the message of reconciliation and grace in broad, symbolic terms. The matriarchal tradition of the church, however, has preserved the true rabbinic teachings of Jesus.

The implications of this important volume of the Bibfeldtian bibliography on pastoral care are quite important. Pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy can receive important new directions from this study. The theological implications are also quite important. The conclusions that Bibfeldt draws concerning the matriarchal tradition in preserving the rabbinic emphasis have similar importance to modern feminism. The implications that can be drawn from this book are really quite staggering. And bear in mind that this modest study has merely been a eisegesis of the title. Once the book is actually located, a study of a similar nature on even just the table of contents could be quite fruitful and offer much food for thought.
THE 1987 FRANZ BIBFELDT LECTURE  
April 15, 1987  
"FRANZ BIBFELDT AND THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL THEOLOGY"

It is indeed a singular honor to appear before you for the second time as the Franz Bibfeldt lecturer, charged with the awesome --- if unenviable --- task of bringing this community of scholarship up to date on the latest work of this master of modern theological reflection. Indeed, this occasion is so --- how shall I put it, overwhelming --- that I am somehow reminded of Mark Twain's remark that "I would not want to join any club that would ask me to be a member." To which Bibfeldt reportedly added, "But if the food was good enough, I would join anyway." And so, here I am.

There is, however, one important difference between this appearance and my last Bibfeldt lecture in 1980. In 1980, I was an unknown, impoverished assistant professor, without tenure. Today, I am an unknown, impoverished associate professor, with tenure. This is what people in the business school call a "career trajectory."

And it is that career trajectory, really, that brings me back before you again today for this second appearance as a Bibfeldt lecturer. You see, once you have tenure at this institution, you are, not to put too fine a point on it, stuck. M.A. students come and go, even Ph.D. students eventually finish their degrees and move on, but once you are a tenured member of this faculty, you're sentenced to an eternity of cheeseburgers and beer at Jimmy's, waiting in line at the bank, and running around the fieldhouse track like lost souls in some
lower circle of Dante's hell.

To be sure, other institutions may try from time to time to lure you away, but by the time you get tenure, you're addicted to the odd combination of high-level intellectual discussion and devastating peer pressure that characterizes University of Chicago. This is the only place I know that has a book of the month club where the members write the books.

So sooner or later it occurs to you that once you've got tenure, the only way you're going to get out of here alive is somehow to get rid of it. And according to university statutes and the AAUP standards, the only way to get rid of tenure is to be found guilty of gross incompetence or moral turpitude.

That is where the Bibfeldt lecture presents a unique opportunity.

You see, most forms of moral turpitude require considerable competence to pull them off. So if you try to get out of here by committing moral turpitude alone, the authorities will probably just say, "Aha --- that proves it! We can't fire you. You're too competent." And if you try to get out by displaying gross incompetence, they'll just pat you on the shoulder and say, "That's OK. At least you haven't committed moral turpitude."

This is what is known as "Catch-22."

Now in that context, an invitation to deliver the Bibfeldt lecture is a singular opportunity, because a Bibfeldt lecture is one of the few human activities in which you can display both gross incompetence and moral turpitude at the same time.
With that prefatory statement of purpose, then, I proceed to our subject for the day, "Franz Bibfeldt and the Future of Political Theology."

Things have been remarkably quiet in Bibfeldt studies since 1980. It is as though this great master of modern European thought were exhausted by the labors that gave us his seminal dissertation on the problem of the year Zero, the epochal theology of both/and, and the innovative methods of pastoral care for the dead. Perhaps, some of you had thought, the time has come at last for Bibfeldt's retirement --- a well-deserved rest in his little chalet at the foot of the Swiss Alps, surrounded only by his books, the memorabilia of his distinguished career, and world famous collection of pornographic post cards.

But if you had thought that, you would be wrong. The elusive Bibfeldt has not been retired. He has been extending his work into yet new areas of study. The master of history, biblical studies, systematic theology, practical theology, and religion and psychological studies has been traversing the globe, looking for a new orientation for his theology --- and, of course, for a good glass of beer.

Bibfeldt's research methods for defining a new area of theological studies may be of interest to those of you who are looking for a dissertation topic, or for the large number of you who just happen to be methodology junkies. Whatever your purposes may be, it's worth my taking a few moments to describe it. Here I borrow heavily from a recent treatise on the subject by Kent Dorsey, who has done extensive research applying the Bibfeldt method to the definition of dissertation topics in ethics.
and society. The method, known as the method of "cognitive integration through randomized deflection," is subtle, and difficult to grasp on first hearing, but it will help if you will try for a moment visualize the intellectual universe as a very large pinball machine. What happens next is best expressed in Dorsey's own words, from which I quote:

The thought of a graduate student bouncing about from book to book, lecture to lecture, and conversation to conversation may sound unfortunate unless you remember that the value of the bumpers and targets and holes and passageways increases each time the steel ball runs into them. In order words, a random search for a viable dissertation topic can be fruitful if you listen for the bells and pay attention when you occasionally hit something with some substance.

Using this sophisticated research method in hopes of pinpointing a new area for his own theological reflections, Bibfeldt has himself been doing some bouncing recently, not only from lecture to lecture and book to book, but indeed from continent to continent, and, some would say, from bar to bar. He has, of course, made the obligatory trip to China although his work there has not received the publicity it deserved. Owing to the poorly trained translators employed by the major wire services, no one recognized that among the Western bourgeois heresies that the discredited Chinese leaders were recently forced to recant was the theology of both/and.

Bibfeldt's real breakthrough, however, came after the trip to the orient, in a visit to the Third World --- or, to locate it more precisely, --- on a two week package holiday in Cancun.

That two weeks concluded with one long evening at a tequila factory and two days in bed watching the intellectual universe
flash "tilt" in bright red letters, but Bibfeldt returned home with the realization that what had been missing in his theology up to this point was politics. He had spent his career doing the kind of theology that Segundo has called "traditional academic theology," though when Segundo was asked about Bibfeldt's theology in particular, he called it something quite different. What Bibfeldt knew he needed, after his close encounter with the Third World, was a theology of political praxis.

The transition to political theology was not easy for Bibfeldt, for political theology, as we all know, requires fundamental choices and cannot remain neutral about the social conditions and ideological conflicts that divide persons in today's world. Bibfeldt, by contrast, had always been neutral to the point of blandness. Other theologians have built their careers on John 3:16 —-["Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum"]— for God so loved the world. Bibfeldt's theological motto, by contrast, is Revelation 3:16 —-["Sed quia tepidus es, et nec frigidus, nec caldus, incipiam te evomere ex ore meo."]— "Because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Bibfeldt is the theologian of "both/and." His answer to Barth's thunderous "Nein!" to the natural theology of Emil Brunner had been a conciliatory little pamphlet entitled "Vieleicht?" His hermeneutical method, as I suggested in the Bibfeldt lecture of 1980, had always been to affirm all propositions simultaneously, in the hope that some of them might be true, and a few of them might even be popular. Choice, particularly controversial choice, runs against the grain of Bibfeldt's theology.
But his Third World experience changed him profoundly, and after several weeks of reading the major works of the Latin American theologians, he discovered his own angle of vision on the problems of political theology. Bibfeldt surveyed the possibilities, made his choice, and affirmed it boldly. He announced a new theology, based on a fundamental option — for the rich.

The "fundamental option for the rich" did not initially inspire the level of interest for which Bibfeldt had hoped. It did get him roughed up a bit by four angry priests who had previously had reputations as pacifists, but who have subsequently taken to writing essays in favor of revolutionary violence. Nevertheless, Bibfeldt pressed on, against the criticisms of the skeptics, to clarify the basic premises of the fundamental option for the rich.

These premises have now been made clear in a brief article which has not received the attention it deserves, partly because it was rejected by most of the major journals and finally appeared in print in the March issue of Penthouse, where, for reasons that will suggest themselves, it was largely overlooked.

On the supposition that most of you will not have seen it, I will venture to summarize the major points. Bibfeldt's "fundamental option for the rich" begins, like much political theology, with social theory, in particular with Max Weber's analysis of the role of religion in the shaping of modern capitalism. Bibfeldt, however, goes beyond Weber, for Weber simply noted an "elective affinity" between capitalis
acquisitiveness and Protestant religion. Bibfeldt turns this into a normative theological position. Unlike the classical Calvinists, who believed, so Weber suggested, that material success was a coincidental mark of divine favor, so that those whom God loves become rich, Bibfeldt offers us a more Arminian theology that leaves room for human action in the divine plan. For Calvin, those whom God loves are apt to become rich. For Bibfeldt, those who become rich, God is apt to love.

In place of the austere, Calvinist deity who inexplicably allocates election and damnation to a helpless humanity, Bibfeldt offers us a god who, not to put too fine a point on it, toadys up to the rich. In place of a God who sides with the poor and the peasants, Bibfeldt offers us a god who likes to hang out around the yacht club. This theology has the immense practical advantage that it eliminates almost all of the inconvenient discrepancies between Euro-American popular culture and the requirements of Christian faith. Once this is clearly understood, it is certain to catch on.

Bibfeldt, never shy about his own innovations, quickly moved to put the fundamental option for the rich into practice by opening a neo-conservative think-tank in Washington D.C. It is, of course, important for those who advise major political figures to keep themselves out of the limelight, so few people have been aware of the importance of the work that has gone on the Wahlverwandschaft Institute in recent years, but Bibfeldt's impact in administration circles has been widely felt. It is a little known fact that Lt. Col. Oliver North was once a student at Yale Divinity School, and you can be sure that when he had to
mastermind the secret approaches to the Iranian moderates, he knew who to ask for advice on the proper theological overtures to make to Muslim fundamentalists. When the full story is told, one of the great moments in twentieth century theology will be Bibfeldt's secret trip to a remote airport hanger, where he thrust a cake and an inscribed Bible into the hands of a startled Robert MacFarlane, just before the latter set out on his momentous trip to Teheran. Even the Senate doesn't know about that one yet.

I could go on. I could describe Bibfeldt's efforts in domestic policy areas, including his little understood part in the preparation of first version of the W-4 withholding form. I could speculate on the allegations that during his government service, he was also moonlighting as a fundraising consultant to Oral Roberts, but you get the idea. Bibfeldt is far from retired. And given his new, practical political turn, his the influence of his theology is bound to be a political presence among us for some time to come.

More could be said, but that is a research project for another day. For the moment, my purposes have been served. Bibfeldt's fundamental option for the rich is now available to you for study and for further discussion, and I am at least halfway to a solution of my tenure problem.

Some of you are aware that I have recently received a grant which is intended to allow me, as the announcement states, to pursue my research for the next year "under the freest possible conditions." I figure that with this presentation today, I have
taken care of gross incompetence, and I now have a full year to work on moral turpitude.
FRANZ BIBFELDT AND THE USES OF THE DOCTORAL EXAMS

All of us who spend our lives running around in academic circles are intimately acquainted—to the point of boredom and nausea—with the debates about the purpose, content, goals, and philosophy of higher education in our times. From the "Because we say they’re great" books debate and ruminations over whose mind is closed—or is it whose mind is American?—, to dictionaries of cultural literacy which enable us all to "pass" without knowing a thing, to our own debates about whose narratives are pure and impure, to conferences on collections of papers from symposia responding to reports of studies on the implications and effects of curricula on communities and their many characters: we are sunk, indeed mired, in weighty and learned considerations of the social purposes of our work. The culturally literate scholar cannot help but think of Socrates—the first academic to drink himself to death.

And the astute theologian cannot help but think of Bibfeldt. For if ever an academic was sunk and mired... Indeed, we turn to Bibfeldt because, as so often, we find that he has rushed in where others fear to tread. For this debate, about the meaning of our work and the rationale for our paychecks, requires all the methodological legerdemain, exhaustive research, incisive analysis, clarity of expression, and originality of insight which students of Bibfeldt have long sought in his work—but so seldom found.

And yet. And yet. Perhaps in this debate our long-expressed confidence in Bibfeldt as a contributing scholar will

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be vindicated. For only recently a new manuscript has come to light, serendipitously recovered from the botany library of a small community college in northern South Dakota, where Bibfeldt’s weighty considerations were being used, apparently, as a leaf press.

But, thankfully, we have it now: Bibfeldt’s own Long Discourse on the Study of Theology, Philosophy of Religion, Scripture, Church History, Liturgy, Hymnody, Folk Music, Interpretive Dance, Pastoral Care, Parish Administration, Haberdashery, and Etiquette. Apparently the transcription of a filibuster by Bibfeldt at a faculty retreat high above Cavuga’s waters some twenty years ago, the Long Discourse gives us a detailed look at Bibfeldt’s vision of an educational institution suited to a theory of both-and and a praxis of suffering.

And though it is somewhat daunting for a mere student such as myself to make her AAR debut by presenting material from the illustrious Bibfeldt, surely the advance of knowledge is more important than self-interest—as Bibfeldt has certainly taught us in his own life and practice.

I shall confine my reading of the Long Discourse to the section that shows surprisingly original thought on Bibfeldt’s part. Here, in abbreviated from, the discussion of "The Five Uses of the Doctoral Exams."
Introduction

We must do everything to establish the doctoral exams, and we must require work. We say that doctoral exams are good and useful, but only in their proper use. The doctoral exams are a light that illumines and shows, not the compassionate understanding of the faculty or the knowledge of the students, but the wrath of the faculty, the stupidity of the students, and their condemnation in the sight of the faculty, and their possible expulsion. That is as far as the doctoral exams go. After that, the advisor and the job market take over.

1. Restrained of sin and from challenging the faculty

First, the university has ordained doctoral exams, indeed all exams, to restrain sin by pre-empting all the students’ waking time and any of their sleep beyond a mere five hours. When students abstain from sin, they do not do this voluntarily or from the love of virtue but because the length of the bibliographies and their fear of failure leaves them no time to sin. Therefore restraint from sin is not cleverness but rather an indication of stupidity. The doctoral exams make it abundantly clear that those who desire to take them are not clever but stupid and insane.

This restraint is extremely necessary and was instituted by the faculty, for the sake of faculty time for research but especially to prevent the wisdom of faculty counsel from being hindered by the tumults and seditions of arrogant and ambitious students. This is particularly necessary because, when (through
the doctoral exams, the students' stupidity, and the wisdom and 
judgment of the faculty are revealed to them. It is impossible 
for them not to become impatient, murmur, and hate the faculty 
and its superior wisdom. Students cannot endure the judgment of 
the faculty and their own possible failure, and yet they cannot 
flee, not if they wish to be gainfully employed. So they 
inevitably falls into blasphemous criticism against the faculty. 

So the first function of the doctoral exams is this: at 
least by fear of punishment to restrain certain students who are 
untouched by any respect for their betters unless compelled by 
feeling the dire threat of the doctoral exams reading lists.

2. **Destroy false confidence in own knowledge and ability**

What, then, is the second function of the doctoral exams? 
The destruction of self-confidence. Really a lovely function! 
This is the primary purpose of the doctoral exams, that through 
them students' recognition of their stupidity might grow and 
become pervasive. Therefore the chief and proper use of the 
doctoral exams is to reveal to students their inability. 
blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, arrogance, and contempt 
of the faculty, the university, and the hiring, tenure and 
promotion system. Yet this use of the doctoral exams is 
completely unknown to the masters students, and to all second 
year students who go along in the presumption of their own 
knowledge. But the entire group who have finished course work is 
flushed with fear. For since student rationality becomes haughty 
with presumtion of knowledge, and imagines that on account of
this it is pleasing to the faculty. therefore the faculty has to send some Hercules, namely, the doctoral exams reading lists, to attack, subdue, and destroy with full force this monster, which is a repugnous, stubborn, and stiff-necked beast, and must learn that it has been destroyed and damned by its workload. Hence this use of the doctoral exams is extremely beneficial and very necessary. For as long as the presumption of knowledge remains in a student, there remain immense pride, self-trust, smugness, hate of the faculty, contempt of faculty teaching schedules, and ignorance of the wisdom of the faculty.

The length of the doctoral exams reading lists takes away from the students all self-esteem. While it shows the faculty's knowledge, that is, the knowledge alone acceptable to the faculty, it warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns every student of his own ignorance. For students, blinded and drunk with self-love, not to mention cheap booze, must be compelled to know and confess their own feebleness and impurity. If students are not clearly convinced of their own ignorance, they are puffed up with insane confidence in their own mental powers, and can never be induced to recognize their inanity as long as they measure themselves by a reading list of their own choice. But as soon as they begin to compare their reading lists with the faculty's lists, they have something to diminish their bravado. For, however remarkable an opinion of their intelligence they formerly held, they soon know that they are panting under so heavy a weight of books, articles, commentaries, encyclopedias, and notebooks, as to stagger and totter, and finally even to fall
down and faint away. And they discover that they are a long way from wisdom, and are in fact teeming with a multitude of misconceptions, presuppositions, assumptions and fallacies, of which they previously had not even heard. Thus students slough off the arrogance that previously blindeo them and encouraged us to admit them in the first place.

3. Drive into the counsels of the faculty

Therefore, third, the doctoral exams are a preparation for true understanding. For then the faculty can be the guide of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted, the desperate, and of those who have been brought down to nothing at all. And it is the desire of the faculty to exalt the humble, to enlighten the blind, to comfort the miserable and afflicted, to educate the stupid, to give money to the deserving, and to send those who are desperate and depressed to some other institution.

For we must say to the students: "After the doctoral exams have humbled, terrified, and completely crushed you, so that you are on the brink of despair, then see to it that you know how to use the doctoral exams correctly; for its function and use is not only to disclose your stupidity and the justified disgust of the faculty but also to drive you to the faculty for guidance and a research topic." For the faculty's advice is a light that illumines minds and makes them productive. It discloses what the beneficence and the mercy of the faculty are; and what the benefits of tenure are; and how we are to attain these.

This says that the faculty did not develop doctoral exams to
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quench the dimly burning wick but to extend faculty counsel to the students, to bind up the graduate fellow, and to proclaim a topic to the ABD. But it takes work and labor for those who have been terrified and bruised by the doctoral exams to be able to raise themselves up and to say: "Now I have been crushed and troubled enough. The time of the doctoral exams has caused me enough misery. Now it is time for listening to the faculty, from whose mouth there come messages of wisdom." Now they are ready to be teaching assistants.

4. Initiate students into the discipline

While by the dread of faculty judgment students are restrained at least from outward rebellion, with minds yet untamed they progress but slightly while studying for exams, yet become partially broken in by bearing the burden of all those books. As a consequence, when they are hired, they are not utterly untutored and uninitiated in academic discipline as if it were something unknown. Though they still have need of a bridle to restrain them from so slackening the reins on the pursuit of pleasure and relaxation as to go to the movies more than once a year. So the doctoral exams are to the pleasure principle like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work.

5. Lay hold of the promise of the goal

Fifth, the doctoral exams are the best instrument for students to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the field to which they aspire, and to confirm them in our
understanding of it. And not one of our students should escape from this necessity. For no student has heretofore attained to such wisdom as to be unable, from the daily instruction of an advisor, to make fresh progress toward a purer knowledge of the discipline. The teaching assistant will also avail himself of this benefit: by frequent meditation upon the influence of his advisor, to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of self-assertion. In this way the students must press on and lay hold not only of the texts, but the accompanying promise of future success, namely a tenured full professorship in a university with no intercollegiate athletic program.

Thus the wisdom of Bibfeldt. But we, who are veterans of doctoral exams, know that Bibfeldt was wrong. Doctoral exams have but one, sole, and exclusive function: instruction in true knowledge of the good, the true, the beautiful and the holy. And concomitant with this knowledge comes the sure conviction that justification can never be attained by work. Now Bibfeldt’s colleagues at the time recognized the severity of his error in greeting his proposals with a resounding “We’ll think about it.” Subsequently, another faculty member proposed a system quite different from Bibfeldt’s, which uphold the one use of the doctoral exams. and it is this system which prevails in all graduate programs in religion even today. As many of can and do attest from our own experience. Really. We do.
This festival is a tribute to the widening field of Bibfeldt studies. While I cannot promise that my own reflections will add one whit more to Todd's analysis of Bibfeldt, they will I hope prove helpful in some fashion that is not too *garrish* but that appeals to *yu* in a scholarly way. But I'll make no bets about that.

I will grant you that recent lectures at our annual meetings have paid special attention to the texts of Bibfeldt—Professor Lovin's insightful analysis of recent Bibfeldt texts dealing with the liberation of the rich being only one example. Parenthetically, let me suggest that while it is not my topic for the day, Dr. Lovin's analysis is intriguing reading for anyone attempting to assess Bibfeldt's possible preferences among this year's presidential candidates. Who might he support? Quoting Lovin's text now:

> Bibfeldt's hermeneutical method...has always been to affirm all propositions simultaneously, in the hope that some of them might be true, and a few of them might even be popular.

If you combine that basic method with Bibfeldt's "fundamental option for the rich," it seems to me that George Bush could well be Bibfeldt's candidate. But I'm reluctant to judge so quickly. You, I'm sure as much as I, have noted Bibfeldt's silence during this campaign. If you'll recall, around last September there were reports in the *Times* that Bibfeldt might announce his support for a candidate, but that never materialized. Now, given the similarity of Bibfeldt's language with that of such figures as Martin Marty and Gerald Brauer, with whom he is often discussed, my hunch is that Bibfeldt may have felt a close affinity for the campaign of Joe Biden. One reason for my suggesting that possibility, is, and I think this came out in *The Quest for the Historical Bibfeldt*, that Franz was the first
Bibfeldt in perhaps a thousand generations to attend the university. After Biden dropped out of the race, Bibfeldt may have lost interest.

Well, that's an interesting possibility, but we need to move on to the more enduring, academic concerns involving Bibfeldt.

Rather than fix our attention on any one particular work of Bibfeldt today, I will attend instead to what I consider the correct approach to reading the texts of Bibfeldt—texts which I believe to be uniquely enigmatic in our studies here at Chicago. In the brief time allotted me, I will attempt to articulate a method of reading the Bibfeldt texts—a method that addresses quite specifically the unique Bibfeldtian phenomenon of, what I call, "the vanishing text."

I mentioned at the outset that this festival is a tribute to the widening field of Bibfeldt studies. Now, I think it is a truism that as secondary materials increase the primary text tends to actually recede from view (i.e., one reads the commentaries and not the text); the case of Bibfeldt, however, offers a profound anomaly. These Bibfeldt texts do not recede—they vanish!—the world of study they have engendered being their only trace. (How fortunate that we at Chicago have a hermeneutical Holmes, as it were, but appropriately for us, named Tracy to follow that trace? Whether Bibfeldt's work constitutes a "classic" in the broad Tracian sense only time will tell, but perhaps in these quarters we need to invoke a new category—that of the "local classic.")

The result, however, of this vanishing phenomenon is that the Ricourian "world" in front of the text is empty of content, leaving only the world of readers, who must devise a strategy for following the text in its vanishing. In their attempt to decipher these vanishing (or the now synonymous Bibfeldtian) texts, many of these readers have alluded to the
correspondence between Bibfeldt and Martin Marty. No doubt analysis of such correspondence is helpful—yet a further trace, perhaps, but a trace that also vanishes—like the hair on Marty’s head.

The widening field of Bibfeldt studies is due in part, I believe, to the rapid deployment of literary-critical, philosophical, and theological understandings of reading and writing. And in a deconstructive world these Bibfeldt texts are, I argue, classic models of the sleight of hand that is writing, models of scripture sophistication which do not take themselves seriously and which model for us an uncanny *ares morendi*, an art of dying, of passing away—wryly smiling, as it were, at our attempt to separate argument from artifice.

Now then, finally, ought one to read Bibfeldt? I do not want to default to the time-worn expression—imagination. No doubt a good bit of that helps the Bibfeldt experience. But I think one should start with several shots of Jim Beam—this to provide whatever *proof* one needs to feel grounded in this task. The Beam gives a new twist to the notion of "proofreading," which is what I call my method of reading.

Several more shots of the Beam will begin to shift that ground—projected now into the Dionysian world that flattens the text on its face, in which the self feels itself as an analogous vanishing trace and so a formal, if artificial repetition of the vanishing text.

Several more shots and one can experience the blurring of boundaries of primordial language reading into itself, and this move to intuication—to the Dionysian—of passing out beyond the self, will itself leave a certain trace in the morning!

This fluid method of reading Bibfeldt, pouring over the text, pursues the vanishing trace, and ultimately reveals the *text* to be what every
student or professor has always known it to be: a headache! This view of
the text as headache, as hangover, of its Dionysian, ecstatic vanishing
into nothingness is exemplified per excellance in the vanishing texts of
Bibfeldt. The reading, mind you, is pure pleasure—the pleasure of the
text, as one reads in excess and enjoys the intoxicating pursuit of
Bibfeldt’s presence. But the end of our jouissance is sobering; Bibfeldt is
the paradigm of the text that escapes us; the paradigm of our loss.

But let us gather courage at this our annual celebration, which
celebrates itself—the world of Bibfeldt readers, to carry on, to play the
Gam—well, I mean the game well, and to do the best we can to follow the
trace. I hope you will join with me now in pursuing that method which
leads to the jouissance of the Bibfeldtian insight!

Frost!
Franz Bibfeldt: The Life, and Scholarship on the Life

Some of us, I know, have rather thin knowledge of Bibfeldt's life and work -- excepting, of course, anyone who has taken qualifying examinations, where Bibfeldt is truly and often magnificently omnipresent, and not merely on bibliographies.

This lack of awareness is easily accounted for. Contrary to the theory of the faculty that this has to do with the revisions in the Master's level curriculum, I submit that simple statistical analysis provides the answer.

In the 70s, a Divinity School student took an average of 12.5 years to complete the doctorate. This translates somewhat roughly into 8.465 years of residence in Swift Hall. Using Bibfeldt's personalized equation for turning years of graduate residence into Bibfeldtian awareness, we arrive at a BF factor--not to be confused with the BS factor, a later Bibfeldt invention--of 9.

Now in the 80s, a Divinity School student has taken an average of 9.4 years to complete the doctorate. This translates, again somewhat roughly, into 7.982 years of residence in Swift Hall, for a BF quotient of 1.6.

My efforts today are directed to raising that quotient through a brief excursus on Bibfeldt's life and the first Forschungsbericht, or summary of the scholarship, ever attempted. This material is the result of a thorough investigation of the Bibfeldt files in the Foundation Offices -- located at random around Swift Hall.
The facts are astonishingly complex. Bibfeldt was born on November 1, 1897, at Sage-Hastbei Groszenkneten, Oldenburg, Niedersachsen, Germany, one day prematurely, having been conceived in the back seat of an 1892 Volkswagen following a Candelmas party. His early education was at Turnverein, where he flunked Indian Clubs and had nothing left to do but go into theology. These difficult years were, however, formative for his theology. For example, during a duelling match in gymnasium, Bibfeldt jumped during a thrust. Years later he would draw upon this experience in his definitive contribution to Jewish-Christian relations, "Empathy with the Circumcised."

Bibfeldt received his D.D.T. -- Doctorate of Digressive Theology -- in 1929 from the University of Worms. His doctoral dissertation was on "The Problem of the Year Zero" -- there is no year between 1 B.C. and 1 A.D. -- and this existential fact has confused Bibfeldt; thrown off, he arrives one year early or late for events, and has left a trail of nothing but graffiti in the bathrooms of Swift Hall. Throughout the 70s, it was generally thought that Bibfeldt worked only in men's rooms, but in 1981 Katie Dvorak demonstrated that Bibfeldt had in fact infiltrated women's rooms as much as five years earlier. Basing her thesis on the assertion that Bibfeldt's linguistic experiments never got past the first four letters of "analysis," and on a close reading of Bibfeldt's definitive contribution to early church history, Getting to the Bottom of Early Christian Literature, Dvorak proves that the early fencing incident had more decisive
consequences for Bibfeldt than chauvinist interpreters supposed: it was no problem for Bibfeldt to dress in drag and enter the women's rooms. The result was his typology of graffiti, later applied to his Bullsgeschichte theory of biblical hermeneutics: Profanity, Declaration, Dialogue, Fradulents, and Accretals.

As you can see from the already digressive direction of this summary, pinning down anything about Bibfeldt is difficult, and so in 1976 an earlier session of this sometimes annual and always unsystematic conference dedicated itself to "The Quest for the Historical Bibfeldt." Joseph Price presented the latest findings on Bibfeldt's massive commentary on the Epistle to Philemon. Published in 1933, Philemerbrief devotes one full paragraph to each letter of each word of the Epistle, resulting in at least one chapter on each verse. Bibfeldt's most renowned chapter is his 12th, on verse 12, which he interprets as "Oneismus, Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels..." Price also discovered a manuscript by Bibfeldt, A Pragmatist's Paraphrase of the Sayings of Jesus. Operating on a hermeneutic of reversism, in which "any saying which is too hard to follow is to be understood to mean the opposite of what it literally says," Bibfeldt reinterprets the Sermon on the Mount. Time does not permit a detailed presentation of this work, but selected translations should give you a sense of its general thrust:

Matt 5:3: "Blessed are the rich in money, for they can build bigger and better churches. Who cares about the Kingdom of God?"
and

Matt 5:8: "Blessed are those whose external appearance and behavior are impeccable, for they shall look nice when they see God."

Dennis Landon took a more pessimistic view than Price. He argued that the definitive illustration of the quest is found in the poem of Gellett Burgess:

"Yesterday upon the stair,
I met a man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today,
I wish, I wish he'd stay away."

Landon characterizes Bibfeldt as the theologian absconditus, noting the unpublished but definitive popular biography of Bibfeldt written by Gay Talese, *Blessed Sage for Hire*. It is Landon, too, who provides us with Bibfeldt's principle of "anonymous ubiquity," his corollary to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle: "I can be there and not be recognized, I can be recognized but not be there; I can even be not there and not be recognized."

Landon also cites Bibfeldt's devotion to the half-asked question and the publication of Bibfeldt's dissertation by a pornographic French press as *The Story of O*.

1979 may prove to be the richest year ever for our understanding of Bibfeldt: no less than three significant contributions to scholarship on the great man arrived in this year. Otto Dreydoppel and Janet Summers presented discussions of work on Bibfeldt's theories of pastoral care. Dreydoppel
concentrated his attention on Franz's theory of the pastoral care of the dead -- truly a ground-breaking achievement -- which begins with the insight that the dead are the truly silent majority and thus the definitively oppressed group. As the one theologian alive to the dead issue, Bibfeldt, out of gratitude to the dead for their adaptability to his theology, lavished his attention on their needs. He argues that the dead are excellent Rogerian therapists, since their ability to listen patiently is unexcelled; they are also perfect EST clients since they can sit still, not just for twelve or sixteen hours, but for really long stretches of time. Bibfeldt also addressed particular pastoral problems of the dead, such as their ennui and their extraordinary tendencies to depression, and extended his sense of pastoral care to social justice: Bibfeldt sponsored several housing discrimination suits on behalf of the dead, noting that they were almost always confined to one-room basement apartments and that previous writings on this matter all had terrible plots. The result was Bibfeldt's definitive work, The Minister as Mortician. Finally, Dreydoppel underscores Bibfeldt's particular empathy for the evangelical dead who practice the gift of inert healing and whose slogan is "died again."

Janet Summers presents a detailed analysis of Bibfeldt's approach to the living, as summarized in his popular text, I'm Okay; You're a Cretin, or a Slob, a careful analysis of how Bibfeldt's model of pastoral care is best applied to people who could care less. Summers also notes Bibfeldt's innovative use of
a hermeneutic of suspicion, based on his assertion that the baby Jesus sought to fool people, as seen in Luke 2:12: "...the baby Jesus was lying in a manger." The scrupulous text critic also notes the hint of conspiracy three verses later: "Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger..."

1979's third contribution came from the first contributor in our midst today (and so, for the first time, I am bound to some moderate semblance of accuracy in my account). Then Assistant Professor Robin Lovin presented "Franz Bibfeldt: The Breakdown of Consciousness and the Origins of the Quadrilateral Mind." As Ellen Wondra noted subsequently, the title is a fooler: it refers not to Methodism, but to Bibfeldt's personal cerebral composition, in which the usual two-sided brain is in fact four-sided, combining the usual occupants of poet (right side) and IBM executive (left side) with a composer of television jingles (upper lobe) and a card shark (lower lobe).

This, my survey leads me to believe, is one of the great major breakthroughs in Bibfeldt scholarship. You see, Bibfeldt's is the theology of Both/And, constructed in response to Kierkegaard's Either/Or; when negative reviews of Both/And appeared, Bibfeldt responded by publishing Both/And And/Or Either/Or -- which received mixed reviews. It was Bibfeldt who answered Barth's thunderous Nein! to natural theology with a timorous Vielleicht?. Bibfeldt seeks agreement with everyone and wants to make everything come out right to ensure that he is always relevant. His coat of arms is Proteus rampant on a
weathervane; his motto is Spanish, "I Dance to the Tune that is Played."

Now it seems to me that Professor Lovin's thesis about Bibfeldt's cerebral composition makes the greatest sense of all this nonsense, and I can do no better in this context than to cite his own conclusion: "Unlike the Freudian theories of Erikson or the Piagetian theories used by Fowler and Kohlberg, this (the quadrilateral mind, you remember) was a formula that matched the data. Those who know Bibfeldt have often remarked that he seems to be barely conscious. Jaynes' theory leads to the exciting speculation that perhaps he isn't conscious at all."

After keeping a low profile during the years of his tenure review, now Associate Professor Lovin returned to the podium for an unprecedented second lecture one year ago, in the Spring of 1987. On this occasion his topic was "Franz Bibfeldt and the Future of Political Theology." This more recent event constitutes the sole part in the 1.6 BF quotient which most of you possess, so I will be brief: suffice it to say that here Lovin traces the emergence of Bibfeldt's empathy for the third world as arising from a two-week junket to Cancún, which resulted in his new political theology, a preferential option for the rich. Lovin also traces Bibfeldt's clandestine political activity in tantalizingly indirect fashion -- suffice it to say that when Robert MacFarlane makes a clean breast of it about the source of that key-shaped cake and the inscribed Bible that went to Iran, Bibfeldt will be in the news yet again.
Now we turn to today's contributions. In closing, however, I would like to offer a brief, insincere observation. This review of Bibfeldt has, inappropriately, reminded me of Schweitzer's *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. As you no doubt recall from your reading of this text in its original German edition, it is Schweitzer's thesis that Biblical scholars who devoted their efforts to understanding who Jesus was almost always wound up with a Jesus who was precisely what they and their generation fancied themselves to be. Might it not be the case that the same is true with Bibfeldt? Do we not make Bibfeldt in our own image? If so, then what we are told about Bibfeldt in fact tells us more about the speaker than it does about Franz. I think we should keep that in mind as we listen to today's contributions.

Richard A. Rosengarten
March 30, 1988
LANDMARKS AND LANDMINES IN BIBFELDT SCHOLARSHIP

American Academy of Religion
November 21, 1988

Robin W. Lovin
University of Chicago

"In the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only in death."

Contrary to what you might suppose, those lines were not written by Franz Bibfeldt. They appear in Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, first published in 1651.

Bibfeldt has on more than one occasion claimed that he wrote those lines, but this claim is now regarded, in the most informed scholarly opinion, as extremely dubious. I was once myself inclined toward the theory of Bibfeldtian authorship by a psychological argument, since it seemed to me that what we might call the schizo-schizophrenic characteristics of the text could only have been produced by Bibfeldt's uniquely structured quadrilateral mind, which I have, brilliantly, if I do say so myself, described in one of my early contributions to Bibfeldt scholarship. (That essay first appeared in the Jahrbuch für Analyse und Motocycle Maintenance in 1979. Some of you may be familiar with the English translation in the University of Chicago's Criterion magazine.)
A conclusive refutation of Bibfeldt’s claims to authorship appears, however, in a report of archival research conducted by a team of scholars working in the public library in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. The point to a copy of *Levithan* which contains a card recording that the book was charged out to an "F. Bibfeldt" for sixteen days in 1952, and that he paid — under protest — an overdue fine of 6¢.

Bibfeldt himself has published a detailed reply to the findings of the Oconomowoc archivists, in which he alleges that the Hobbes text is a forgery and offers an elaborate proof that he is himself the original author. Bibfeldt’s case, however, rests on a dubious use of carbon-14 dating techniques according to methods which, were they generally accepted, would date the Shroud of Turin during to reign of the Pharoah Amenhotep IV.

Despite Bibfeldt’s own persistent references to Hobbes as "the pseudo-Bibfeldt," it seems best to conclude that the citation with which I began this lecture is an example of, not to put too fine a point on it, plagiarism. It is, however, nonetheless interesting for that. For Bibfeldt’s claim is that the account of the war of all against all, which Hobbes’ *Leviathan* presents as an explanation human life in the state of nature, is in fact his own participant observer’s report on an AAR Annual Meeting held in New York in the late 1970’s.
Just how Bibfeldt would know this remains unclear, since he is not known ever to have actually attended an AAR Meeting. Not that he hasn’t tried. But Bibfeldt suffers from an inability to master the modern, Gregorian calendar system. I don’t mean that he can’t tell what day it is. I mean that he can’t tell what year it is. The problem, as many you know, stems from his dissertation at the University of Worms, on "The Problem of the Year Zero." The problem is, as Bibfeldt became the first person in nearly two thousand years to notice, that there is nothing between 1 B.C. and 1 A.D. One minute you’re a full year before Christ, and then, boom, one minute later, you’re into the first year of the Christian era, with nothing in between. Bibfeldt was so distraught by this discovery that his health failed, and he was unable to complete his Habilitationschrift. While in the sanitarium, Bibfeldt did write a series of short essays on wine and cheese that were published as a sort of Re-habilitationschrift after his discharge.

The residual problem, however, is that Bibfeldt remains to this day unable to focus on the question of what year it is, and so inevitably arrives either a year early or a year late for events. Just this week, he has been reported wandering aimlessly between the Marriott and the Sheraton in Boston, and according to a phone call I received very early this morning, he was ejected
late last night from a hospitality suite at a podiatrists convention in Anaheim, where he had wandered in under the impression that it was the University of Chicago reception. Dennis Landon’s depiction of Bibfeldt as the theologian *absconditus* points to the deeper theological meaning of the Bibfeldt’s mysterious presence absence that has marked these gatherings of the AAR, but the management of a string of convention hotels and sixteen angry podiatrists who lost their wallets last night in Anaheim have offered a more concrete, experiential account of the *absconditus* part.

Surely, though, Bibfeldt is, at the AAR, always present even though perpetually absent. Otherwise, how could we account for the sensitive description of the personal relationships at the heart of academic life which he, not to put too fine a point on it, stole from Hobbes’ *Leviathan*: "Grief for the calamity of another is pity, and ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himself, and is therefore called compassion. ... Grief for the success of a competitor in wealth, honor, or other good, if it be joined with endeavor to enforce our own abilities to equal or exceed him, is called emulation; but joined with endeavor to supplant or hinder a competitor, is called envy."

Or this observation, drawn from hours of field work in the receptions of learned societies and the cocktail lounges of con-
vention hotels: "Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those grimaces called laughter; and is caused either by some act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves."

Or this, which can only have been arrived at by spending time listening in on interviews at the placement center: "The vainglory which consisteth in the feigning or supposing of abilities in ourselves, which we know are not, is most incident to young men, and nourished by the histories, or fictions, of gallant persons; and is corrected often times by age and employment."

In modern times, as we all know, and as has been so well demonstrated by the high level of argument attained in the recent presidential campaign, the art of politics has achieved a level of refinement that transcends the crude political passions that Hobbes discusses. Bibfeldt's -- how shall I put it -- appropriation of Hobbes' text cannot be relegated to the tawdry realm of ordinary plagiarism. His is the more subtle purpose of pointing out to us the residual value of Hobbes' now outdated political thought as an introduction to the sociology of knowledge in academic communities. We are all familiar, for example, with Hobbes' characterization of the life of man in a state of nature
as "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Bibfeldt’s important contribution has been to develop those terms into a typology for classifying the presentations and responses at the AAR.

Most familiar, according to Bibfeldt, is the combination which he refers to as the "Type A Session," characterized by a poor paper, followed by a nasty response. There is also, however, the "Type B Session," in which a brutish paper is followed by a short response, and of course, less familiar combinations, such as the short paper with a poor response, the nasty paper with a nasty response, and so on. The four types yield sixteen different possible combinations, and Bibfeldt’s writings suggest that steering committees could add zest and variety to the section meetings by assigning a type to each paper proposal, and to the personality of each prospective respondent, and then arranging the sessions so as to maximize the number of different combinations presented. Publishing these ratings in the program book would enable Academy members to plan their attendance at sessions more efficiently, and would also remove much of the air of mystery which now surrounds the question of why some paper proposals are accepted and others are rejected.

Now, I want to pause for just a moment in this exposition of Bibfeldt’s, how shall I put it, re-pristinization of Hobbes, to
say how much I know the great theologian himself would personally appreciate the warmth of your reception of his ideas this morning. Bibfeldt, as Professor Richard Rosengarten has observed, "seeks agreement with everyone and wants to make everything come out right to ensure that he is always relevant." Bibfeldt, not to put too fine a point on it, likes to be liked.

Those of you who understand this trait in the great man will appreciate how unpleasant he found the controversy that surrounded his recent attempt to enter the field of Third World theology. Some of you will have read in Criterion of Bibfeldt's "preferential option for the rich." Those of you who followed the subsequent developments in this line of thinking were, I know, shocked at the Vatican inquiry into Bibfeldt's teaching on these points, and outraged at Cardinal Ratzinger's order silencing him for a period of, as the Cardinal put it, "Oh, six or seven years ought to do it."

Bibfeldt, who tries desperately to avoid offending anybody, was deeply distressed by this conclusion to the inquiry. I think what bothered him most about the silencing order was that he isn't even Catholic. Bibfeldt's own Lutheran Bishop attempted to clarify the situation in a conciliatory statement which, while noting that silencing orders are not customary practice in the Lutheran communion, added that we mustn't be too hasty in judging
our brethren, and that this might just prove to be one of those situations in which the Lutherans could learn from the Catholics. The Bishop added, and I quote, "I mean, here I stand and all that stuff, but there's gotta be some limits, for crying out loud."

Given the deep and painful divisions caused by the preferential option for the rich, it is important to remember Bibfeldt’s earlier and more broadly accepted contributions to modern theology. Indeed, given Bibfeldt’s penchant for plagiarism, we might also appropriately speak of his contributions to ancient and medieval theology as well. But surely none of these rank quite so high as the war of all against all that Bibfeldt has so vividly described at the heart of our academic enterprise, the perpetual and restless desire of power after power that, ceaseth only in death, tenure, or promotion to a named chair; and the penetrating insight of the typology of "poor, nasty, brutish, and short" for describing scholarly contributions.

We must not mistake the magnitude of Bibfeldt’s achievement at this point. We are in the presence of a breakthrough comparable to his innovative theory of pastoral care for the dead. At a point in the development of Western scholarship in which the anthropologists have robbed us of Rousseau’s noble savage, and the historians have disabused us of the notion that the Germanic tribes ever actually lived in a state that preceded the develop-
ment of the social contract, Bibfeldt has rediscovered the state of nature, let loose in the halls of the Chicago Hilton and Towers. In the words of the immortal Pogo, "We have met the enemy, and they is us."
The Bibfeldtian Origins of the Pseudo-Thomistic Literature

To: Dean Lewis  From: Todd Whitmore  For: Bibfeldt Day, 1988

Shortly after Vatican II, there were great efforts to retrieve the original texts of Thomas Aquinas in order to challenge the moral rigidity of neo-scholastic casuistry. Finding original texts of the Thomistic corpus which would support such a venture would open up Roman Catholic moral theology to new horizons. The liberal left of the Catholic Church was excited.

On January 4, 1968, sixty-five years after the death of Pope Leo XIII, a heretofore unknown text was found in Leo's crypt in the basement of St. Peter's in Rome by a snoopy cleaning lady. The fact that the text was in the crypt of Leo, the pope who made Aquinas the official theologian of the Catholic Church, lent considerable authority to the document.

It was entitled: *Summa Contra Lex Mea*, or, loosely translated, The Summa Against Everything Else I Ever Wrote.

The liberal left of the Church was ecstatic.

The authenticity of the text was later cast into doubt by careful linguistic and historical analysis because the word "K-mart" appeared seven times. A quote from renowned medievalist, Professor I.M. Obscure:

"The multiplicitous occurance of the term 'K-mart' definitely indicates that the text in question is pseudepigraphic. Such numerous references suggest that the concept of discount stores had already shaped the mental outlook of the Middle Ages. This is impossible. Analysis of the finds of archeological excavations has irrefutably demonstrated that shopping malls only began to appear on the European scene during the fourteenth century, a full one hundred years after Aquinas, being brought in from the East by Muslim bedouins."

The liberal left of the Church was depressed.

Still, it is worth studying these texts. Here, apparently, is an early dissenting voice from within the community of the faithful. The following excerpt, written in the disputational form of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, is from the *Pseudo-Summa*, first part of the third part of the ninth part of the sixteenth part, question forty-two, article six, entitled, "Whether Jesus was a Woman, or Who is the Head of the Family Anyway?":

Objection 1: The Apostle states that, "The head of a woman is her husband" (1 Cor 11:3) and "The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body" (Eph 5:23). Therefore the husband is the head of the family.

On the contrary, it is stated that a woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle (traditional source).
I answer that procreation of the male offspring requires an 'x' and a 'y' chromosome, while that of the female requires no 'x' [Editor's note: Indications of knowledge of modern genetics also cast doubt on the authenticity of the document]. Now chromosomes are made up of both form and matter, the type being the form, while the substance being the matter. As stated elsewhere, God does not consist of a material substance. Therefore, there is no matter through which an 'x' chromosome can be transmitted to Mary. Hence, with no 'x' chromosome, Jesus must necessarily be a woman.

Furthermore, the Apostle states (1 Cor 11:3) "The head of every man is Christ." Since Jesus Christ is a woman, then the head of every man is a woman. Moreover, since the meeting of man and woman leads to holy matrimony, the woman is the head of the family.

Reply to Objection 1: The term "man" or "husband" can be understood in two ways, to refer to the chromosomal distribution of 'x' and 'y', or to whoever wears the pants of the family. The first definition is restricted to material substance, while the second refers to the form. The Apostle here intends the latter meaning. Either male or female material substance— that is, chromosomal distribution— can take the form of wearing the pants of the family. Now it is stated that "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body" (Eph 5:23). Clearly then, since Jesus Christ is the head of the Church in both form and substance, and she is a woman, the material substance of the woman must be the head of the family in form also, that is, she must wear the pants of the family.

In addition, because the woman is the head "as Christ is the head of the Church," this means that a person bearing the substance of a woman must therefore also take the form of the head of the Church (cf. also Col 1:18 and Eph 1:22).

All passages which refer to the relationship of man and woman, husband and wife, both in scripture and in the Holy Christian Church must be understood in this way.

Finally, this also means that the male material substance must take the form of the woman. That is, for instance, he must do the dishes, and the laundry, and if there be offspring, change the diapers at four in the morning.

This suffices to answer all further objections.

The early 1980's witnessed a resurgence of the dispute over the authenticity of the document. Certain critics seized on the fact that the text in this last reply refers to diapers and not to pampers, a much later development in the material aspect of child rearing. This reopened the debate. The liberal left of the Church was hopeful.
The excitement, I am afraid, was a bit premature. Recent evidence—dug up by a Divinity School research assistant for five dollars and hour (I have been meaning to talk to Dean Gamwell about the wages)—suggests that the true author of the pseudo-Thomistic document is none other than Bibfeldt.

Now, before I go on to detail the evidence, I first need to say that I find it incredible that this man, Bibfeldt, has written hundreds of articles, scores of books, has a full teaching load, trots around the globe giving talks, writes his own weekly column in the widely read journal The Christian Millenium under the acronym, "B.I.M.B.O." -- Bibfeldt does all of this, and still he has time to create a theologian who does not even exist! This is amazing. I have tried to reach him for comment, but, oddly enough, I cannot seem to locate him.

Still, the evidence of his authorship is hard to refute. First of all, an early draft of the document was found on a floppy disc in Bibfeldt's IBM PC. This fact is coupled with the recent disclosure that at the time of the discovery of the document in the crypt of St. Peter's, Bibfeldt, even though Lutheran, was on Fr. Francis Mulligan's five-day package pilgrimage trip to Rome. Finally -- and this is probably the most conclusive evidence--Bibfeldt is the majority stockholder in the K-mart company. It appears that the document was intended as a means of subliminal advertising. It is clear that Bibfeldt is here living out his political theology, so well explicated by Robin Lovin last year on Bibfeldt day, of the "preferential option for the rich."

Incidentally, Bibfeldt is now negotiating with T and T Clark publishers to have K-mart advertising inserts put into Barth's Church Dogmatics. Honest. And it is really not a bad marketing strategy. Right after we read about hearing the immediate and specific command of God, we turn the page to hear that athletic socks are now on sale for only ninety-nine cents a pair.

I close by leaving you with the assurance that even though the authorship of the pseudo-Thomistic literature is all but certain, the controversy continues. Yes, the Vatican has taken it upon itself to silence Bibfeldt for a year (despite the fact that he is Lutheran). But it is only one year, that is, only until Bibfeldt day, 1989.
FIRST ANNUAL HILDA BRAUNSCHWEIGER-BIFELDT LECTURE

Held at Weston School of Theology, Cambridge, Ma. on April 28th, 1989.

The introduction was given by Peter Schineller, S.J. Associate Professor of Systematic Theology. He first ran into the writings of Franz Bibfeldt through his studies at the University of Chicago (Ph.D. 1975). In this lecture, he introduces Weston School of Theology to one of its most infamous or notorious alumna (we think) namely, Hilda Braunschweiger-Bibfeldt.

The inaugural lecture was delivered by Alvaro Ribeiro, S.J., about to complete his STL at Weston.

The audience was Weston students, faculty, friends. The setting was the end of the year Weston Talent and Theo Awards Show. This inaugural lecture was one of the highlights of the evening.

Taped music of Wagner helped put the audience into the correct mood for this lecture. Both Schineller and Ribeiro wore their academic gowns (Chicago and Oxford) to befit the occasion. Alvaro delivered the lecture splendidly, and several times during the presentation, the audience spontaneously (or with a little prodding) burst forth with the appropriate response: e.g., “it was the best of times, it was the ... wurst of times.” And the audience helped complete the title of her recent work, “What are they Saying about ... Wurst?” There was sustained laughter during the presentation and sustained applause at the conclusion. Franz and Hilda would have been proud.

Peter Schineller
Introductory remarks by Peter Schineller, S.J.

Gentlewomen and Gentlemen; Meine Dame und Herren.

Today is an historic moment in the history of the Weston School of Theology. As a highly esteemed theological center, with a highly acclaimed, if sometimes hard to find, faculty, in keeping with this tradition, we inaugurate this evening the first annual Hilda Braunschweiger-Bibfeldt Lecture. By your presence here, I'm afraid you are automatically members of the H.B.B. Society.

Why, you may well ask, hold this lecture? Who is this all too hidden scholar whom we try to resurrect? Her story begins at the University of Chicago Divinity School, where eminent historian Professor Martin Marty unearthed some better or well-unknown manuscripts of her husband Franz Bibfeldt. Since that hateful --FATEful day (excuse me), scholars have bored --POURED over his manuscripts, and have done Franz more justice than is his due. They have plumbed the depths of his superficiality and discovered at times the accidental profundity of his thought. By now, Franz is internationally acclaimed and an annual lecture in his honor is delivered to the theological community of Chicago.

What about Hilda? and Weston? Fragments of Franz led to Harvard Square and to the previously hidden works of his one and only love, Hilda, as we will shortly discover. We are privileged (or perhaps underprivileged) to have this evening the first annual Hilda Braunschweiger-Bibfeldt lecture.

But who could unearth or undermine this treasure? Who could expose us to Hilda's immense corpus? Stanley Marrow was invited, but gave Luke 14:18 as his excuse. Judith Dwyer is in Germany at this moment, tracing the roots of Hilda's thought. But we do have with us, a wise man from the east, one pigheaded enough to do two degrees at Weston, in addition to a doctoral degree from Oxford, one who has opened to a yawning --YEARNing world the letters of Dr. Charles Burney, a book sure to make the bottom of every best seller British sh -- HIT list. Who else could we invite, or even command, to give this inaugural lecture than our own, now in the 34th and last year of his education -- Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Divinity, and soon to be Licensed in Theology, Alvaro Ribeiro !!!
THE VERY FIRST HILDA BRAUNSCHEIGER BIBFELDT MEMORIAL LECTURE

Let me begin by saying how honoured I am to be and possibly the Very Last invited this evening to deliver the Very First/Annual Hilda Braunschweiger Bibfeldt Memorial Lecture. "Memorial" in this context is, of course, entirely appropriate, for Frau Bibfeldt's life and theological opacities have most undeservedly suffered eclipse, so eminently forgettable are they. Allow me then to begin with the old paedagogical ploy of reminding you of what you never knew. As you recall, the University of Chicago claims to have discovered the theology of Franz Bibfeldt, ministry purveyor of pastoral care for the Dead and/to the as-good-as-dead, namely the Filthy Rich for whom Franz Bibfeldt developed a preferential option. The locus of his ministry was the Yacht Club.

But to compare small beginnings with great developments, I have to claim with all due immodesty that while Chicago might have discovered Franz Bibfeldt, we at Weston have discovered Frau Bibfeldt! (do I hear cheers?) Frau Professor Dottoressa Hilda Bibfeldt, née Braunschweiger, whose manuscripts and foul papers were -- for reasons that shall become apparent during the course of this inaugural lecture -- unearthed some short time ago by excavators in Harvard Square under the Wursthaus. To be precise, in the sewage-works thereof.

To understand her works, we shall recall briefly the lowlights of her totally undistinguished career. Fraulein Braunschweiger came to these United States to study at the Weston School of Theology planning to investigate the theology of the Wild West. She emerged from the T-station and landed
in the Wursthaus. It was the best of times, it was the wurst of times. For there in the Wursthaus by happy coincidence sat Franz Bibfeldt on sabbatical from Chicago, consuming his customary stein of theological dissipation. Hilda ordered a knockwurst, and Franz obliged. It was love at wurst sight. This was Hilda's conversion-experience to wursttheologie . . .

On the assumption that with every right there comes a corresponding responsibility, Hilda in the Wursthaus (as a reply to "animal formulated rights theology") the theology of animal responsibility to provide sausages to the human race. Encouraged by her paramour, now husband Franz, Hilda prepared her earth-shattering thesis in which she proved the/text of Mark 5:13\(^1\) to be corrupt. The (from Codex Wursthaus) correct reading, and the basis for her subsequent wursttheologie, goes as follows: "The herd of about two thousand swine went rushing down the mountainside and into the Gadarene slaughterhouse, emerging as an endless link of sausage. Matters went from bad to wurst.

Upon the basis of this doctrine, Hilda Bibfeldt published with Vanity of Vanities Press the following works: Geist in Wurst, a flatulent performance; her study of Vatican II finally entitled Gaudium mit wurst; and What are they saying about WURST? tome a book of which the reviewers observed: "once you put down her book, you never want to pick it up again." She also gained notable notoriety for her review of John O'Malley's Praise and Blame in Renaissance Harvard Square, in which she found little to praise and much to blame. Her unpublished universal catechism states as its first article of faith: "This little piggy went to market . . . ."
Hilda Braunschweiger Bibfeldt's wursttheologie of animal responsibility inevitably developed over the years into her theology of scatology (there is a LINK of course, between the two), reckoning that eschatology is too long a word. In this she complemented Franz Bibfeldt's doctrine: Franz Bibfeldt embraced all theological positions simultaneously in the hope that some might be true. Hilda Bibfeldt embraced Franz Bibfeldt in many positions in the hope that some might others be fun and/fruitful of bratwurst.

This, then, is merely the briefest of introductory inaugural lectures, to alert this academy to the existence of and further exploration needed into the manuscripts and foul papers of Hilda Braunschweiger Bibfeldt, who departed this life prematurely just as her career bottomed-out in the fullness of forgettability.

Yet from beyond the grave, from the Great Wursthaus in the Sky, I am privileged to present to you the following barely-legible fragment culled from her literary remains: she says, "All shall be wurst; and all manner of thing shall be wurst."

The wurst shall be last; and the last wurst; for
A Faith for Franz: The 1992 Bibfeldt Lecture

In this Columbian year we are reminded that the importation of Western European characters and cultures to these shores has been a dubious achievement. As we gather here on this occasion, we commemorate yet another of those questionable extensions of Europe, namely the person of Franz Bibfeldt. Born November 1, 1899, Herr Bibfeldt would be on this April 1, 1992, exactly 92 years of age. (I note that Dean Richard Rosengarten places thebirthdate in 1897, an unfortunate error in his otherwise admirable summary of the Bibfeldt scholarly output). The coincidence of age 92 and year '92 suggests a numerological phenomenon of singular significance, though I'll be damned if I know what it is. I can only share that the coincidence was sufficiently off-putting to cause Shirley MacLaine to decline my invitation to be with us today. I had thought to ask Ms. MacLaine to channel Franz that we might make this event a bit more memorable. But I could not assure Ms. MacLaine that Franz is actually deceased. Then she reminded me that as an Episcopalian, I should recall that Bishop Jim Pike shares this distinction of status with Franz and that unless I am prepared to share like fate with each of them, I might reconsider the whole idea. I have.

I am aware, as I stand in this hallowed place and invoke the name, Bibfeldt, that I hold something of a distinction. Being often in this Divinity School, but only erstwhile of this Divinity School, and then only in interim capacity, I speak of Bibfeldt from a different perspective than those who have preceded me at this podium. I am particularly grateful for this occasion since it marks a significant anniversary for me. I have been among you ten years now. And since I hold no hope of either a degree or tenure, I consider this anniversary a measure of sheer love of God. There are those uncharitable sorts who consider the concept of campus ministry at The University of Chicago a classic oxymoron.

Let me attend to the first of these purposes by building upon the work of my friend and colleague, Robert Grant. It was Professor Grant who shared some years ago his own findings in “The Quest for the Historical Bibfeldt.” Having only lately completed my reading of John Dominic Crossan’s The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant, I well appreciate the laborious task of such historical exploration. Since I have never seen Professor Grant’s paper, I can neither reinforce nor refute his findings. But I do come today prepared to make a substantive contribution to the important and ongoing quest for the historical Bibfeldt.

I begin with the confession that my doctoral studies were in ministry. Nevertheless, I am informed that in order to secure scholarly respect, I must share with you my method. Trained in ministry and honed in the school of experience, I drew upon the most practical of practical theology and adhered to the bulwark of my discipline which is the inexorable truth that it is not what one knows but who one knows that matters in this life. My method was simple. I called the Reverend JoAnn Leach, a dear friend who serves as Episcopal Chaplain to the University of Utah. I asked her to hie herself over to the Mormon Archives and dig up anything she could on the name Bibfeldt. Enlisting the aid of another Episcopalian in the employ of the Latter Day Saints, JoAnn and her colleague searched the computer records. What I am about to share is, unlike much of the Bibfeldt corpus, verifiable; I assure you that I am not making this up! We can now put to rest any and all claims that Franz Bibfeldt is nothing more than an extensive figment of an expansive imagination aided by expensive education.

The Mormon Archives record that a Henry and a Margaret Bibfeldt did reside in Prussia, in the town of Bosseborn, in the region of West Falen. Henry and Margaret baptized five children in the local Catholic church, from whose baptismal records in the original Latin these facts are derived. The eldest of their children, Catherine, was baptized in 1652. Then followed John, Gertrude, and Margaret. Young Fredrick, baptized in
century indicates a liberal tendency in the family. Still, this assertion by Professor Marty, while it may tell us everything about the faith of Franz Bibfeldt’s parents, reveals nothing of Franz Bibfeldt himself. Dean Rosengarten’s note that Franz was conceived in the back seat of an 1892 Volkswagen following a Candlemas party is at the same time questionable and revealing. We must reject the Volkswagen, that vehicle having been invented some forty or so years later. The Candlemas party, however, has much to commend it suggesting as it does both the liberality and the high-church leanings of the parents. I should point out, however, that the date of Candlemas being February 2, Franz Bibfeldt’s reputed birthdate of November 1 suggests a gestation of ten months. But then, Franz was nothing if not cautious.

It is my thesis that Franz Bibfeldt continued the liberal leanings of the family. An exhaustive consideration of Bibfeldt’s work suggests that Franz Bibfeldt was, by faith, an Anglican. And who better to advance this proposition than an Episcopal priest of Sicilian and Swiss ancestry? If I can be an Anglican, why not Franz?

That Franz resisted the Anglicanization of the family name may be attributed to a mixture of pride and prudence. The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology indicates that the prefix “Bib” is from the Latin bibere, meaning “to drink.” The suffix “feldt” is, of course, the German word for “field.” No nation whose geographical nomenclature includes a place called “Spitalfields” could be trusted to render a felicitous equivalent to the rich cadences of Bibfeldt. Thus did pride intervene to prevent a most unhappy alteration. Moreover, no theologian desirous of living off publication royalties could want for a more impressively brooding Germanic moniker than “Bibfeldt.” Thus did prudence make her contribution.

Bibfeldt was likely drawn to the Anglican tradition for the same reason that the Church of England has proven haven for successive generations. The Church of England

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3 Rosengarten, p. 2.
It is Bibfeldt’s response to Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or* that truly established Bibfeldt’s central place in Anglican theology. Bibfeldt’s *Both/And*, and his sequel, *Both/And/And/Or/Either/Or* remain, to my mind, the quintessence of Anglican thought. Evidently, the present Archbishop of Canterbury agrees and offers his portrait on this occasion in token of his esteem for Bibfeldt’s rightful claim to the title Defender of the Faith. Parenthetically, do note the expression on the face of his Grace, and recollect my earlier comments on episcopal prerequisites.

Joseph Price generously shared in his own lecture upon Bibfeldt the discovery of a rare manuscript entitled “A Pragmatist’s Paraphrase of the Sayings of Jesus.” Employing what was identified as a “hermeneutic of reversism,” Bibfeldt offered that “any saying [of Jesus] which is too hard to follow is to be understood to mean the opposite of what it literally says.” This work has obviously exercised far-reaching influence. One need only study the history of Anglican homiletics to see the practical application of this principle at work. Or just drop in next Sunday to any Episcopal parish. Odds are good you won’t be disappointed. Of course, there is evidence that the influence has spread beyond the Anglican communion, but ours is an ancient and hallowed experience and I doubt one could find earlier evidence than is posited in our history. Indeed, there are hints that Bibfeldt may have arrived at his own thoroughgoing reversism from a close study of Henry VIII’s application of these principles to Roman canon law, a process undertaken six times, obviously to satisfy the demands of the empirical method.

It was this hermeneutic of reversism that gave rise to Bibfeldt’s foundational translations of sacred scripture. He rendered Matthew 5:3 as “Blessed are the rich in money, for they can build bigger and better churches. Who cares about the Kingdom of God?” Anglican architecture, though rivalled in this city by Catholic structures, still claims the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City and the Washington

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5 Rosengarten, p. 3
6 Rosengarten, p. 3
In 1979 Otto Dreydoppel offered important insight into Franz Bibfeldt's theory of the pastoral care of the dead. Bibfeldt advanced the "insight that the dead are the truly silent majority and thus the definitively oppressed group." One cannot fully appreciate this insight, nor its incarnation, until one lead worship in an Episcopal congregation. I shall be forever indebted to Bibfeldt’s definitive work in this area, his magnificent book, *The Minister as Mortician*. It has guided me on many occasions and made me a far more effective pastor, especially upon those occasions when I have been invited to visit congregations in the suburbs.

In one regard, however, Franz Bibfeldt distinguishes himself, even amongst Anglican theologians. It is not characteristic of our tradition to write much down. That we have such rich resources by which to trace the trajectory of Bibfeldt’s ascendency (or one may maintain, his descendancy) into Anglican theological history is due not abundance of primary resources, but rather to a extensive catalogue of secondary materials. That so much theology could be derived from so little script is a distinctly Anglican characteristic. Still, Franz Bibfeldt remains the perfect antidote to those Anglicans who seem to have maintained for centuries that the only guarantee of safe theology is to do no theology.

Indeed, in researching this paper today, I found among the archives, scribbled on the back of a scrap of paper, some random notes in the unmistakable hand of Bibfeldt. The script is unmistakable because, in a characteristic act of solidarity with adolescent women for whom he held abiding respect and morbid fascination, Herr Bibfeldt always dotted his "i’s" with a small open circle. The notes were scrawled on what appeared to be a matchbook cover from a pub named The Trojan, or perhaps a fragment from a box of prophylactics. It is hard to tell. In either case, our hero was obviously smitten by the theological muse even in such unlikely circumstances as the evidences suggest. He seems to have been pondering the terrifyingly modern challenge of doing "safe theology." The
W. C. Fields who — perhaps in an unattributed paraphrase of Bibfeldt himself — said, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again, then quit. No use being a damn fool about it.”\footnote{Plimpton, p. 57.}

Sam Portaro
April 1, 1992
The University of Chicago
For The Encyclopedia of the Reformation

BIBFELDT, FRANZ, (1899- ). Born at Sage-Hast bei Groszenkneten, Niedersachsen, Oldenburg, Germany, this historical theologian has made numerous contributions to Reformation-era research. Some analysts have described him as belonging to a "predeconstructive" school, since he anticipated by fifty years many of the Derridaen contentions, notably those having to do with the "instability" of texts and readers. Professor Bibfeldt demonstrates his grasp of the notion of textual uncertainty because of his claim that all events and all texts can be credibly read in opposing ways, with no loss of meaning, so long as the reader himself and/or herself were/was capable of Bibfeldtian instability, or "being of two minds."

Bibfeldt began his career as a patristics scholar; it was his devotion to the theme of his doctoral dissertation at the long-defunct Helmstadt University as well as his Habilitationschrift which has also made him an elusive figure. One year late in handing in his original dissertation, he stumbled upon the work of Dionysius Exiguus (Denis the Little), the Scythian monk who invented the Christian calendar but misdated the birth of Christ in the Roman imperial scheme. Bibfeldt changed thesis topics and promoted his own Pseudodionysian Exiguan school of calendrical reform. Noting that neither in Dionysius’s nor in other calendars was there a year zero—they all dated events in 1 B.C.
or 1 A.D., Bibfeldt, with his characteristic love of balance, urged that both alternatives be always offered. On those terms, he argued that his dissertation was not a year late but a year early. When scholarly convention called for reference to "The Common Era," Bibfeldt began to date the publications of his work, e.g., Handbuch des Geschichte der Quellen und der Literatur des canonischen Rechts von Dionysius Exiguus 1929 and/or 1931 A.D. and/or C.E. (The professor also tends to be elusive, always missing by exactly a year the occasional EuroAmericanAustralasian Bibfeldt festivals held on April First.)

Having learned the arts of balance and compromise, but having failed to attract followers for his NeoDionysian School, Bibfeldt deserted patristics and moved to modern Kirchengeschichte. On a trip to Spain to confirm the Bibfeldt Coat-of-Arms motto (Spanish for "I Dance to the Tune Which Is Played" under the god Proteus atop a weathervane) he read Unamuno’s endorsement of Kierkegaard. Hearing then of the interest in Kierkegaard’s Either/Or, Bibfeldt published a response, Both/And. When critical reviews appeared he wrote a sequel, Either/Or And/Or Both/And, and, thanks to his Exiguan calendrical approach, was able to date the sequel earlier than the original. He followed this with his celebrated response to Karl Barth’s little book Nein! with a big book, Vielleicht?

Finding equipoise between patristic and modern periods difficult, Bibfeldt chose to balance his chronological posture by concentrating, as he has for fifty years, on Reformation-era research. He resolved first to specialize on the Thirty Years War, beginning at the beginning. With empathy for Jaroslav von Martinitz and Wilhelm von Slawata, the Catholic councillors who were unceremoniously thrown out the window by Protestants in the "Defenestration of Prague," Bibfeldt, in ecumenical spirit, published a
sequel, "The Refenestration of Prague." In it he urged that Protestants push Catholics back through windows. He was awarded the Ratzinger-Kueng Medal of Reconciliation for this appeal.

For a time Bibfeldt attempted to draw Continental theologians' attention to the Scottish Reformation, with his translation of John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. However, the Oldenburg School of feminists, threatening to turn April First into an annual Hilda Bibfeldt Fest, forced him to retitled it: *The Last Whimper before Supporting the Postpatriarchal Leadership of Women*.

This Scottish foray proved to Bibfeldt that he should stay with Continental research, so he has devoted recent years to the work of his fellow Helmstadtian, Georg Calixtus. Bibfeldt's series, *Studies in Syncretism*, includes an update of *Judicium de controversiis theologicis quae inter Lutheranos et Reformatos agitantur, et de mutua partium fraternitate atque tolerantia propter consensum in fundamentis*. This update advocates, *inter alia*, the substitution of Shi'ite Islam and Lefebvrist Catholicism for Calixtian Lutheran and Reformed examples. It remains unpublished. When asked about a due date, the aged professor smiles: "Next year. Or, *vielleicht*, last year."

Martin E. Marty is the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Modern Christianity at The University of Chicago.
"Behavior Modification"

The successful method of therapy practiced by Dr. ISRAEL GOLDIAMOND is dependent upon a contractual agreement between the subject and his therapist which explicitly states the objectives of the therapy. Dr. Goldiamond, Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the University of Chicago, and his colleague, MARVIN SEGAL, Research Associate in the Department of Psychiatry, tell how the patient and therapist establish a step-by-step pathway of behavior modification. They discuss how effective this is as a means of measuring progress towards the agreed-to objective. Our moderator is MILTON ROSENBERG, Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences at the University of Chicago.

"The Quest for the Historical Bibfeldt"

This show features the two winning essays in the annual contest humorously honoring the somewhat fictitious theologian, Franz Bibfeldt. The contest, co-sponsored by the Franz Bibfeldt Foundation and the University of Chicago's Divinity School Association was won by UC Divinity student, DENNIS LANDON. Runner-up JOSEPH PRICE, also a UC Divinity student, cites FBI documents recently released by U.S. Attorney General Edward Levi, former President of the University of Chicago. In his essay Price uses these to piece together the gaps in Bibfeldt's life and scholarship. Landon traces Bibfeldt's considerable influence on American culture. He reveals the Bibfeldtian touch on the film Nashville, the novel Ragtime, and on advertising and television.

Subscribers to "Conversations at Chicago", are asked to air each show as soon after release date as possible and to return all tapes promptly. Tapes should arrive on the Thursday prior to the Sunday release date. Airing the show one week after release date is all that is necessary to protect against postal irregularities. If you fail to receive a tape, please inform us so that we can send you a replacement and adjust our inventory of your returns. Return all tapes to the University of Chicago, Office of Radio and Television, 1307 East 60th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

RHH/ep
Mr. Charles Collingwood  
CBS Radio News  
524 W. 57th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Mr. Collingwood:

We of the Franz Bibfeldt are always interested and grateful when our mentor receives publicity, even when placed in the pejorative category of "hoax." Therefore, we were very interested to learn from Martin Marty that Professor Bibfeldt was one of the subjects of a "Dateline America" report by you on April 14, 1975.

Having endured years of talk about hoax, and much ridicule from those who abjure his insights, we now follow the example of Bibfeldt himself (who feels replying to criticism to be a violation of his hard fought-for ambiguity) and accept all publicity as worthwhile and gratifying.

Therefore, would it be possible for us to receive a copy of the script of that April 14 broadcast for our archives. We would be very grateful.

Sincerely,

Dennis L. Landon, President  
The Franz Bibfeldt Society  

cc: Martin E. Marty

PS: It is a further disappointment to us that CBS joined the other networks in their obtuse refusal to cover Professor Bibfeldt's latest North American visit to deliver the Crater Lectures at John Jay College.
24 July 1975

Dear Mr. Landon:

I am very sorry to say that it was not I who made the broadcast on Dr. Bibfeldt (whom the Lord preserves), but I wish I had. However, because of the reverent tone of your letter and my own theological instincts, I have traced it down.

The author was Charles Kuralt, a colleague of mine who understands these matters better than I. I enclose the transcript you requested.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Collingwood
Dateline America for Sunday, April 13, 1975


COMMERCIAL

Dateline, Chicago, Illinois. In 1973, Bill Edwards died while investigating a drug ring operating between Hong Kong and Metuchen, New Jersey. At his alma mater, Davidson College, North Carolina, his name and image were enshrined in a memorial. Bill Edwards, real estate pioneer, researcher into zero gravity, millionaire and patriot, was gone. More than that, it was revealed the other day, Bill Edwards never had been. The storied young bachelor was a hoax perpetuated by the jolly class of 1953. At Davidson, they're busy dememorializing old Bill.

They needn't feel bad. Consider the case of Professor Josiah S. Carberry of Brown University. Since 1929, Professor Carberry's penchant for exotic travel has been reported in the Brown Alumni Bulletin, and his treatises have appeared in scholarly journals. Only recently, the aging professor contributed a long thesis on his research into rotatable laboratories for revolutionary experiments. Every time it is reported that Professor Carberry has passed on, he writes an angry letter from Bulgaria or Mozambique denying it.

In the entry hall of the University of Chicago Divinity School, there is a framed picture of Mayor Daley autographed, "To Franz Bibfeldt, a great and esteemed theologian." Alderman Roman Pucinski signed his picture, "To Franz Bibfeldt, who is an inspiration to all of us." There are similar greetings from Lester Maddox and from
Playboy's 1971 Playmate of the Year. Franz Bibfeldt was born as a fake footnote in a term paper in 1940. Reviews of his book, "The Relieved Paradox," have appeared in print, but those who tried to locate the book at the University of Chicago Library found that it was always checked out. Dr. Bibfeldt's friends at the University say he is used very mildly, gently, to satirize the system. There's no malice in it. Nor, of course, is there malice in the heroic Davidson real estate pioneer, Bill Edwards, nor in the globetrotting Brown University Professor Carberry. They are free spirits in a stuffy world, and in a way, Roman Pucinski was right. They are an inspiration to all of us. Now this message.

COMMERCIAL

This has been Dateline America. I'm Charles Kuralt, CBS News.