Dear Friends,

It has been a long time since we have communicated with you in a newsletter. We welcome you back to your old reading habits – or, if you are later members of this august group, to your first-ever newsletter. There is news, and a lot of it is good news, and who wouldn’t like that these days?

The Burke Library is now a vital member of Columbia University Libraries. Some of you have wondered what that means to Union Theological Seminary, the longtime parent of a treasure of materials on Christianity and other subjects relevant to theological studies. After several years of learning together, the Columbia Libraries, including The Burke, are now primed to share their expertise in diverse and innovative ways as our 21st-century world continues to change.

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Welcome!

World renowned for its specialized collections, The Burke Library recently received the institutional records of Presbyterian Welcome, an association of New York City churches promoting justice and inclusivity. Recent additions also include the personal papers of Dr. Walter Wink, an influential biblical scholar and former faculty member at Auburn Seminary and Union Theological Seminary.

Thanks in large part to doctoral internships funded by the Mellon Foundation, nine archival collections from The Burke Archives are newly accessible with online finding aids, including the Christianity in Japan Collections (1927-1931), the National Christian Council of China (1919-1950), and the personal papers and photographs of Samuel Dodd, a nineteenth century missionary to China (pictured above).

A new online exhibition of the papers of Wilbert Webster White displays the importance of New York Theological Seminary to the history of biblical interpretation. Another recent digital exhibition from The Burke Library provides startling photographs and first-hand missionary accounts of the Korean Independence Movement (1919).

The Burke Library’s website provides access to these and other new theological resources, including audio recordings of recent lectures sponsored by the Friends of The Burke Library.
The Friends of The Burke Library Christmas Card Sale

Give one-of-a-kind holiday greeting cards from The Burke Library this year. All images have been selected from treasures in The Burke collection. Titles, dates, and locations of images are printed on the back of each card. Proceeds directly benefit The Burke Library.

**Pricing** is $1.50/card plus $2.50 shipping:
- 5 cards for $10
- 10 cards for $17.50
- 15 cards for $25
- 20 cards for $35

**To make your order:** Please contact us at (212) 851-5610 or burke-friends@libraries.cul.columbia.edu. Provide your name and address, your card selection (variety packs and single-card packs available), and the number of cards desired. Send checks payable to:

The Burke Library, 3041 Broadway, New York, New York, 10027

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**The Nativity**, woodcut from Martin Luther Bible, 1530. Message reads, “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.” Color.


**St. Margaret and the Dragon**, from 1450 Book of Hours. Message reads, “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.” Color.


**Adoration of the Magi** from the 15th century Dutch Book of Hours. Message reads, “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.” Color.

**St. Anne with the Virgin and Child**, from a 1519 indulgence. Message reads, “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.” Color.
Special Collections Librarian Leads Expedition to Brown Tower

Despite The Burke Library’s worldwide renown, many current Union students know little about the library’s treasures. And so when Special Collections librarian Michael Boddy offered to give an informal tour of the Special Collections housed in Brown Tower this past June, longtime staff member Betty Bolden and current students Clare Cannon, Crystal Hall, and Lauren Wright jumped at the chance.

The tiny tower elevator carried the group two-at-a-time up to the 14th floor of Brown Tower. Brown Tower houses many of The Burke Library’s special collections, including the McAlpin collection, the van Ess collection, and the Thompson Bible collection, among others. The students’ first impressions were the cool, dry air – a radical contrast with the balmy Manhattan streets outside – and the incense of ancient ink, paper, leather, and vellum.

Michael reminded the students that Union Theological Seminary was founded in 1836, only 60-some years after the Revolutionary War. “History seems remote,” he mused, “but when you look at the history of the seminary, and when you look at these materials, I find it much more accessible, much more present. I’m more aware of how little time has passed [since] the Civil War, the Revolutionary War, the Reformation.”

Highlights of the tour

Union owns the personal Bible of Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, complete with her margin notes and Hebrew translations. Browning was a serious reader of the Bible and believed that Christianity was itself “glorified” poetry. Her Bible is part of the Thompson Bible Collection, which was given to the school in the 1930s by husband-and-wife collectors.

Also among the Thompson Collection is a first edition of the Book of Mormon from 1830. As the story goes, when the patrons weren’t able to pay the publishing bills, a number of the Books were seized by the publishers and sold separately to recoup costs. The Union copy is reputedly one of the seized volumes.

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Living Poetry at The Burke

On April 15th, 2010, over 40 students and faculty gathered in The Burke Library to hear Eleanor Johnson read from her new book of poetry, Her Many Feathered Bones. An enraptured silence fell on the audience as Professor Johnson began to speak; the reading was held in The Burke’s light-filled Terrace Room.

Dr. Johnson is Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. She specializes in late medieval English prose and poetry, medieval poetics and philo-

sophy, law and literature in the Middle Ages, early autobiography, and vernacular theology.

“When I look at these materials, I’m aware of how little time has passed since the Civil War, the Revolutionary War, the Reformation”

“Giving a poetry reading at The Burke was one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences of my life,” Dr. Johnson said, “both because the space was so beautiful, and because the people at The Burke did such a wonderful job of creating an environment in which students felt comfortable talking about and engaging with poetry. The warm and positive energy of Dr. Weaver was remarkable, too, and encouraged the people attending to feel right at home.

“I’m hoping that in future years, I will be able to encourage my graduate students, who are all medievalists in the English department, to avail themselves of the archives at The Burke, and also, of course, to avail themselves of the phenomenally talented faculty up at Union Theological Seminary. Moreover, I think that getting graduate students from Arts and Sciences over to the seminary campus will produce many rich inter-methodological conversations;

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Grant to Study Rare Book Space

The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded Columbia University Libraries $35,900 for a planning project to analyze and recommend improvements to the rare book and special collections area of the Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary. This project focuses on the library's Brown Tower, which houses ca. 200,700 rare books and over 4,500 linear feet of archives.

Erected nearly a century ago, Brown Tower was never designed to provide archival-quality environmental conditions for special collections. Important renovation work was carried out over the past decade thanks to generous funding from the Lilly Endowment, but the space does not yet meet national standards for rare books. The Libraries will engage Garrison and Lull, Inc. respected experts on library and archival facilities, to analyze the current situation—construction of the building, maintenance practices, and equipment used for heating, ventilating, air-conditioning, and humidity control—and to make recommendations for improvements specific to the nature of the collections' materials. "Scientific research has shown that housing books and documents at the recommended temperature and humidity can literally prolong their existence by centuries. Our project goal is to bring the Brown Tower conditions in line with national recommendations to provide the greatest possible protection for Burke's wonderful collection of irreplaceable books and manuscripts," said Janet Gertz, Director of the Libraries' Preservation and Digital Conversion Division.

Major transitions are never easy, and as advantageous as this one is proving to be, it took a lot of hard work to get to this point. With kudos to former Director Sara Myers and the very lean staff, the operations of the library were functioning smoothly when our new Director John Weaver arrived last summer. Since he arrived John has pushed forward to ensure that the Burke continues sustaining its reputation as one of the foremost theological libraries in the Western Hemisphere. John spoke engagingly to the Friends at our lecture last fall, and all who attended were deeply impressed by his scholarship and enthusiasm for libraries in general and The Burke in particular.

In December, a small group of longtime Friends gathered to brainstorm about how we might best move forward in engaging users and library aficionados. We are anxious to introduce more students of all ages and persuasions to the treasures of The Burke. I continue to stand in awe of The Burke collection and the many opportunities to learn from its manuscripts, books, pamphlets, periodicals, and other resources. We want everyone who has any interest in the study of theology to know where to find all this fascinating material.

Being a part of the Columbia system means that not only does The Burke have a wider audience for its materials, but it also has access to the technical and administrative resources of a larger institution. Union students have unlimited access to all the Columbia collections, while Columbia students are discovering both the holdings and the beautiful facilities (such as the Reading Room) of The Burke Library. It's a win-win situation!

We invite you to rejoin us as Friends of The Burke Library. Our popular lecture series continues, with its opportunities to learn from scholars at The Burke. Friends also enjoy special invitations to experience the library's treasures alongside library staff. Contributions you make to the Friends of The Burke Library will be used to add features, equipment, and materials that will strengthen and enhance the offerings of this great library.

Please join us on November 8th, when our speaker will be University of Edinburgh professor Brian Stanley speaking about the future of world Christianity. We will be glad to welcome you back - with a reception, a fascinating lecture, and intelligent conversation. And isn't that very good news!

I wish you a rewarding fall season, and look forward to seeing you in November.

Sincerely,

Mim Warden
Chair, Friends of The Burke Library

(Continued from page 1)
On October 6th, 2009, ten Union students gathered around a small selection of Reformation-era pamphlets from The Burke collection. The event was a part of the Union Theological Seminary course CH332, “Themes and Issues of the Protestant Reformation,” taught by Professor Euan Cameron. Around the fourth week of class, Dr. Cameron always brings his students to The Burke Library to examine the rare early-printed material in the Reformation pamphlets collection.

“Martin Luther and his contemporaries not only invented a new way to look at theology,” Cameron says, “they also discovered a new genre of theological writing: the small quarto.” The quarto is a “relatively short pamphlet in the vernacular intended for quick and easy reading. Serious theology had never been provided in that sort of vehicle before.”

Among the items students viewed was a 1519 letter of indulgence from twelve cardinals to the Dominican Nuns of Unterlinde, Colmar (pictured above). It is printed on a single two foot by three foot sheet of vellum. Viewing this highly decorated indulgence was “very moving,” Dr. Cameron observed. It gave the students “a strong sense of what the sale of indulgences – an absolutely critical issue in the early Reformation – must have felt like.”

Special Collections in the classroom: students awed by indulgence

I’d love to see theology students and humanities students pool their intellectual resources to tackle problems that are of interest to both groups, maybe in discussion fora, or in graduate student colloquia. “For my own research, the library is particularly critical at the moment because I am working intensively on late medieval English mysticism, and many of the resources I need for my projects are not widely available, but are housed and maintained at The Burke. Not only in terms of primary texts, but also secondary criticism—periodicals, scholarly books . . . The Burke collection is absolutely remarkable for those works, too.”

Don’t miss a selection from Professor Johnson’s recently released book of poetry, Her Many Feathered Bones (Achiote Press, 2010), on the back of this issue.
Solace and moral formation from William James

The next time you find yourself seeking advice and consolation, consider putting down that magazine and picking up a copy of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James. At least Dr. Brian Mahan thinks that’s what you ought to do. Dr. Mahan presented the fall 2009 Friends of The Burke Library lecture, “William James as Pastoral Philosopher.” We invited Dr. Mahan to share his reflections about the event.

**Why do you think James is relevant to today’s theological students?**

As I noted in the lecture, James expresses concern about the growing professionalization and specialization within theology and within philosophy as well. As his colleague and former student George Santayana points out, James was a member of a Harvard philosophy faculty committed to teaching philosophy, often philosophy of religion, as a way of forming the moral character of the young men and women placed in his trust. This moral pedagogy, if I may call it that, characterizes his writing as well and provides an invaluable model for integrating theory and practice.

On a related note, I think James’s writing challenges the widespread tendency in theological education, as I have experienced it anyway, to promote a radical disjunction between individualism and community. When I call James a “pastoral philosopher,” as I did in the lecture, I mean to say that he is concerned with the formation of individuals in community. James deconstructs acquisitive, materialistic individualism, from the inside, so to speak, by exposing its contradictions and consequences, not, as is so often the case, it seems to me, by recommending “community” in some abstracted, idealized way, as an alternative to individualism.

**What was a highlight of the lecture for you?**

I spoke to two people, one before the lecture and another after, who had read James when they were going through a difficult time, both on the recommendation of friends. Their readings of James were similar in this way to Gertrude Stein’s and Ludwig Wittgenstein’s reading of James, and Miguel de Unamuno’s, as well. All read James’s “The Varieties of Religious Experience” for advice and consolation during such times. Their readings, again, were not anti-philosophical. Were James not able to address the intellectual inhibitions to faith, to meaning, in the face of pain they were experiencing, they would not have been able to take comfort in the rest of what he had to say.

In terms of the lecture itself, I particularly enjoyed the question and answer period. It was also a kick to actually hear my own lecture read by my wife, Kim, as I sat there swimmy-headed with labyrinthitis. I thought that worked out very well. Kim is an excellent public speaker, and I’m immensely grateful to her.

As our scholar-in-residence, do you have any visions or ideas for The Burke Library?

John Weaver and I have been talking about how Burke might serve to enhance theological education. I’ll be around again next year, so the question is not merely theoretical. I came across an article recently which suggested that libraries could fill the role as the sponsors of ongoing conversation. There are of course lectures like my own, workshops and so forth, reading groups, even blogs. But libraries also have a special duty and the capacity as well to link present-day conversations with the ongoing conversation we call tradition. Not only that, libraries preserve contemporary conversations so they are not lost to posterity and connect conversation partners across continents and disciplines.

Let me also say, more personally, with regard to my own writing and reflection, that I think words arise from and are enriched by silence. The kind of scholarship and spiritual writing which emerged from the medieval monasteries is a case in point. Conversation is also mysteriously linked to silence. The Burke Library, though not silent, plays counterpoint to the occasional stridency of the classroom and the bustle of the church, as well.

“With regard to my own writing and reflection, words arise from and are enriched by silence.

The Burke Library plays counterpoint to the occasional stridency of the classroom and the bustle of the church”
Michael Boddy with a selection from the Thompson Bible Collection

The Burke Library owns one of the largest and richest collections of original 15th century bindings in the United States. Unlike research libraries that had their 15th century books rebound, Union lacked adequate funding—and so retains beautiful original bindings.

What can make a group of books into a special collection? Michael put it this way: “If you have a first edition of a Marvel comic, that’s kind of nice, [but] that’s not a particularly interesting special collection. But if you have 5,000 early Marvel comic books, all of the sudden there’s a comprehensiveness to it that a researcher or a comic book aficionado would be interested in. So [regarding the Missionary Research Library pamphlet collection] we have a pamphlet on anti-smoking from 1805. So it’s kind of interesting. But if you had 20,000 pamphlets on religious and social issues, then it becomes a significant resource. Many of the books in our Missionary Research Library are monographs, say, from the 1930s and 40s, things you could pick up at a book sale for fifty cents. But when you have thousands of them, then it becomes a research collection.”

The Minister-at-Large Movement was a push to educate and evangelize immigrants in urban areas in the early 19th century. The Burke Library contains a vast collection of religious tracts from that time. The tour group uncovered such topics as “The Young Man’s Monitor Showing the Great Happiness of Early Piety and the Dreadful Consequences of Adultery and Youthful Lusts,” “An Earnest and Affectionate Address to the Poor Particularly in Regard to the Prevailing State of Drunkenness,” and “A Caution Against Ill Company, or a Discourse Showing the Danger of Conversing Familiarly with Bad Men.”

Back to 2010

Michael, Betty, Clare, Crystal, and Lauren descended from Brown Tower in a state of awe. As Michael flipped off the lights an almost imperceptible shiver ran through the group. “We could tell some good ghost stories up here,” whispered Clare. The past and its people felt startlingly close at hand among the ancient books, the unfamiliar handwriting and ink splotches of those who went before. Betty Bolden summed up the sense of the group: “I suspect if more students knew what was up in the Brown Tower, they would really get excited.”

Friends’ Fall Lecture: Discerning the Future of World Christianity

On Monday, November 8th, 2010, at 6:00 p.m., the Friends of the Burke Library will sponsor a lecture given by Dr. Brian Stanley, Professor of World Christianity and Director of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh. In his lecture, “Discerning the Future of World Christianity: Vision and Blindness at The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910,” Dr. Stanley will discuss to what extent speakers and delegates at the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh transcended the limitations of an imperial age and began to glimpse some of the directions that world Christianity would take over the ensuing century.

The event will take place in the Social Hall at Union Theological Seminary and is free and open to the public.

An historian by training and inclination, Dr. Stanley is fascinated by the processes of change which take place whenever Christianity crosses cultural frontiers - which involve the way in which Christians understand and define their faith as well as the diverse and ambiguous responses which Christian missions have provoked in host societies.

“Christianity is most true to itself when engaged in the risky business of mission”
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UPCOMING FRIENDS EVENTS

November 8th, 2010, 6pm:
Brian Stanley speaks on the future of world Christianity.

February 17, 2011, 6pm:
New Testament scholars Davina Lopez and Todd Penner present exciting new research.

Please see www.utsnyc.edu/burkelecture for more information.

Parting Words

We sing, as we are aroused.
Ours is an ambient arousal,
among which grow burning cedars.
Among the burning, cedars grow
as a consideration of fire.
Consideration: the togetherness of stars.
Burning cedars grow, still burning.
The burning cedars grow burning
as a consideration of fire, then fall
in symphony with each other, with stars,
which are always falling, always on fire.
The house is on fire in its parts of cedar.
The house on fire is in parts of stars.
It sings as it collapses, o sympathy of stars.
We are aroused by the crashing of the house.
We are aroused by the symphony of stars.
We are aroused by the burning of cedars,
and by their blue and orange singing.
We are aroused by blue.

We are aroused by orange.
We are aroused, and we sing:
amid falling timbers, we sing, fragrant,
heavy and luminous timbers, we sing:
we are on fire in our parts of cedar,
we are on fire in our parts of stars:
our parts of cedar as parts of stars.

From Eleanor Johnson’s recently published book of art and poetry, Her Many Feathered Bones. Read more about Professor Johnson’s reading at The Burke Library inside this issue.