

Austin Graduate School of Theology

Theologia

Volume 84, Spring 2002



Journey from Central Asia

First Words

President's Message



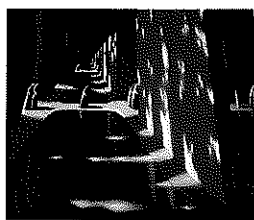
A FAVORITE ASPECT OF BEING AT AUSTIN Graduate School of Theology is its proximity to the University of Texas. Particularly this time of year, when the weather is cool and the skies are clear, it is pleasant to walk across the campus and take note of the sights. The stately oaks surrounded by the mix of buildings, the fountains and the tower, and the rush of students all remind us that this is a place of learning.

Austin Graduate is a glad partner in that enterprise. Our faculty and students reflect the same dedication to excellence in the pursuit of higher education. We are happy, however, to be able to offer the one kind of education that the state university cannot: the study of theology. Here, students can learn about God and study His Word without apology. Furthermore, they can do so at the same level of high academic quality that they would find at the university. Here, they are tutored by a faculty that shares a spiritual conviction about Christ and His Church. One could hardly find a better setting for such a pursuit. It is my privilege to be part of it.

In this issue of *Theologia*, we attempt to give a flavor of what Austin Graduate is like. An article written by one of our professors appears, as do stories about our graduates and what is transpiring in their lives. There is also news about the people who are actively engaged in working with Austin Graduate School of Theology.

We especially want to mention two or three. Wade Osburn has accepted an opportunity to move closer to family, so he is leaving to work in the libraries of Freed-Hardeman University. He and his family will be greatly missed. Ann Grey, faithful and loving servant, is moving into semi-retirement. We are excited to have Hugh and Elaine Gainey coming to Austin so that Hugh can work with us. Lastly, we gladly welcome a new supporting congregation: the Lockhart Church of Christ.

Carson Stephens ■

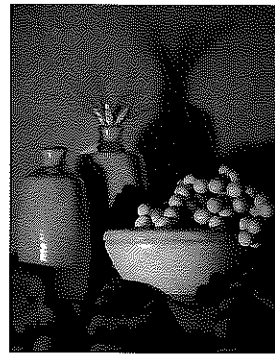


On the Cover
"Going to the Feast"

The works of Alexander Akilov (born 1951 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan) are displayed in the prestigious Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. His paintings reflect the "feel" of life in Central Asia. This work, depicting women of Islam, is in a private collection in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Communion

The Lord's Supper as Central



SUPREME COURT JUSTICE ANTHONY Kennedy has said that September 11 should cause us to reexamine our core values. If we were to do so, we might start by asking what motivated the great outpouring of gifts and concern in the tragic aftermath. Would it surprise us to find them subconsciously rooted in beliefs sym-

bolized by a simple act: the Lord's Supper? There each week Christians are challenged to reexamine their lives in light of One whose selfless sacrifice gave them forgiveness and mercy. The Supper, crucial to Christian values, must remain at the center of our worship.

We should not be surprised with the abiding power of the Supper. Believers know that it is at the table that they touch the boundaries of the eternal. Through the power of enacted remembrance the faithful commitment of the Son of God to the creation is represented. And by deliberate intention, as we eat the bread and drink the cup, consecrated as spiritual food, each week we renew again our claim to the benefits of that committed life.

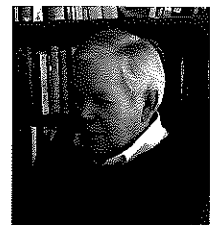
In a self-absorbed world, our appointment at the Table is a wake-up call. It is a reminder of One whose selfless sacrifice exemplifies our own call to selflessness. It reminds us that it is only through the grace of Jesus' efficacious life that we have access and status in the presence of the Father of the universe.

Thus, at the Table, we are called to leave behind all pretensions to elegance or greatness imposed upon us by interaction with our secular culture's pervasive artificiality. At the Table, we get a glimpse of things from a different horizon. There we enter a world claimed and being transformed by the unremitting love of God.

Worship designed to please the self can never truly sustain us. But there is one place where we continue to encounter an ordering of reality that transforms us and maintains our hope. It is at the Lord's Supper. ■

Allan J. McNicol is A.B. Cox Professor of New Testament.

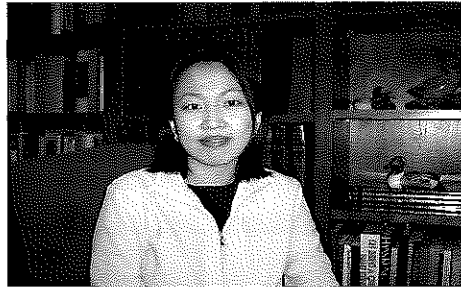
Painting: "Communion," by Stephen Rimmert, 1713 W. 11th St., Austin, Texas 78703



Journey from Central Asia

Graduate, Native of Kyrgyzstan, Speaks of Transition from Islamic Nation

OLESYA TSOI GRADUATED FROM ICS (NOW Austin Graduate School of Theology) in 1998, receiving her Bachelor's degree in Ministry. In this interview with Theologia, the native of the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia speaks of life and her family there and how she came to live and study in Austin.



TH: How is it that you came to America from Kyrgyzstan?

TSOI: I came in 1995 as an exchange student from the former Soviet Union to spend a year at the University of Texas. My major was English. I was not a Christian at the time.

TH: How did you become a Christian?

TSOI: My family is of Korean origin. When I was in America that year, a Korean student invited me to her church. There, I learned to become a Christian.

TH: How is it that you are Korean and yet a native of Kyrgyzstan?

TSOI: There was a large immigration from Korea to Central Asia when Japan invaded Korea in 1910. Many people fled Korea back then.

TH: How did you come to be at Austin Graduate?

TSOI: After I became a Christian, I wanted to know more about the Word. I knew nothing about the Bible. My minister told me about ICS (now Austin Graduate). So, after my year at the University of Texas I went back to my homeland and applied for a visa to study in the U.S. and pursue a degree at ICS.

TH: How far is Kyrgyzstan from Afghanistan?

TSOI: Afghanistan borders Tajikistan

which borders Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan also borders Uzbekistan.

TH: What is the predominant religion of Kyrgyzstan?

TSOI: It is predominantly Muslim, perhaps 85-90% of the population. The Russian Orthodox Church has official status, but it is not the main religion. There have been several Protestant missionaries who have come in recent years.

TH: Were you Muslim before becoming a Christian?

TSOI: No, my family did not raise me religiously at all. My father was a member of the Communist party, and still is. As a Communist, he is atheist. So, we were not religious.

TH: Was your family worried about you when the terrorists attacked New York?

TSOI: My mother was worried about me, but I told her that I was okay and that Texas is a long way from New York.

TH: Has the war with Afghanistan affected your family back home?

TSOI: Not really. Since Kyrgyzstan is not close, it does not really involve them. We have heard that some refugees were coming from Afghanistan through Tajikistan.

TH: How do you think most Muslim people view the recent conflict in America's war with terrorism?

TSOI: I have a good friend who is Muslim. People, like my friend who is not a fundamentalist Muslim, feel bad for the religion of Islam. They think it makes all Muslims look like terrorists and that they do not care about human life. This is not true. Not all Muslims are like the terrorists. In Kyrgyzstan, like other Islamic nations, there are fundamentalists who *do* support the terrorist's actions. But, not all Muslims are like that.

TH: Do you plan to stay in the United States?

TSOI: Yes, there is some racism in Kyrgyzstan toward those who are immigrants. Some think that immigrants, such as the Koreans, do not belong.

Besides, the opportunities to pursue studies are limited there. There is more opportunity for education here.

TH: What was your education like at Austin Graduate (ICS)?

TSOI: ICS felt like being part of a big family--a Christian family. The professors were always willing to give special attention to their students. Of course, it was very difficult at first because I had no knowledge of the Bible. But, the teachers and staff were very helpful.

TH: How has your degree helped you? Has it helped with your career?

TSOI: I work for a computer company in sales. I would say that it is a degree for your life. It is not only for your job, but something to carry through your life and apply it in every aspect whether job or family or life in the church.

TH: You are also involved in a work of evangelism for Austin Graduate, are you not?

TSOI: Yes, I am editing the Russian version of *Things That Matter*. ■

Noteworthy

McNicol Expert Witness in Hollywood Litigation

ALLAN MCNICOL, PROFESSOR OF NEW Testament at Austin Graduate School of Theology, was called to testify in Los Angeles as an expert witness in a lawsuit brought against Trinity Broadcasting Network. Called because of his expertise in apocalyptic (end of time) literature, the case was reported as follows in the January 16 issue of The Christian Century:

A West Virginia woman who sued the Trinity Broadcasting Network, claiming its movie *The Omega Code* stole her idea about a Christian apocalypse, has settled her lawsuit. Neither Sylvia Fleener nor the Christian cable channel would comment on the details of the agreement, reported Charisma News Service. Fleener had sued in July of 2000 for \$40 million, saying the movie had numerous similarities to her self-published book, *The Omega Syndrome*. "The terms of the settlement are confidential, but the matter was concluded in a manner acceptable to both parties," Fleener said in a statement on her Web site. Fleener, who is suffering from a terminal illness, called herself a longtime supporter of TBN. *The Omega Code* was released in 1999 and was an unexpected box-office hit, earning a top-ten place in its opening weekend in movie theaters. ■

Osburn to Freed-Hardeman

CITING THE NEED TO BE NEAR FAMILY, Librarian Wade Osburn has accepted a position with Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson, Tennessee, as Research Librarian.

"Wade and Julie and (daughters) Ellie and Ivy, will be greatly missed," said Dr. Carson Stephens, President. "He has been a real asset."

John Aho, Ph.D. candidate in Library Science at The University of Texas, is serving as Interim Librarian. ■

Ann Grey Moves Into Semi-Retirement

SHE HAS BEEN A FIXTURE AT AUSTIN GRADUATE since Texas Independence Day, March 2, 1981. It was also her 45th birthday. There was no president, only faculty members, a secretary and a part-time librarian. She was hired to work part-time with the business manager.

Ann Grey is known and beloved by so many for her wonderful spirit of love and devotion to the school. Over the years she has earned the love and admiration of many. Her lovely smile and encouraging words always edify and inspire others.

Her mother is now ill, and Ann has needed to spend time in her care, so she will be spending three afternoons a week working for the school to stay in

touch with alumni and other friends.

"What a privilege it has been for me to work with such godly individuals these many years. I have come to know so many wonderful people through my association here, people I would not have known otherwise," she said.

"Twenty-one years is a long time and I have grown weary. By reducing my hours, I am beginning to have time to enjoy my soon-to-be six little grandchildren while they are still young enough to think Grandmothers are very special people."

This grandmother is a very special person indeed. ■



Yale Honors Baldwin

THE YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL HAS NAMED Stan Baldwin as the Abraham J. Malherbe Scholar for 2001-2002. The honor is awarded to students within the Restoration Movement demonstrating character, ability, and scholarship.

Baldwin received the Master of Arts in Religion at ICS (now Austin Graduate School of Theology) conferred at that time by Abilene Christian University.

"It is truly an honor to have been selected for this award," Baldwin said. "Dr. Malherbe has been a source of encouragement and support over the years. He encouraged me to attend ICS back in the early 90's."

"I would have to say that attending ICS was one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life," he continued.

Baldwin serves as Minister of the Word for the Whitney Avenue Church of Christ in North Haven Connecticut. He has previously served two churches in Texas. ■



Stan Baldwin

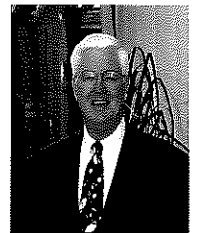
Gainey to Work With School

HUGH GAINEY, RETIRING FROM FERRO CORPORATION in Chicago, has agreed to volunteer his services to Austin Graduate School of Theology and will work in student recruitment and planned giving beginning in April.

Gainey is a native of Houston and a graduate of the University of Texas where he also took courses at what was then the Bible Chair. He married Elaine Hocott in 1961. Elaine is the daughter of the late Dr. Claude Hocott who served as the school's chancellor until his passing.

Gainey's career has spanned several states. He has served as an elder in several Churches of Christ.

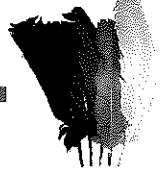
"Retiring early frees us up to work with Austin Graduate School of Theology," he said. "We are so proud of what so many have done to make it what it is today and look forward to a more active role." ■



Hugh Gainey

An American Theology

The Restoration Movement and the Declaration of Independence



FROM THE EARLY TO MID-1800s, THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT¹ became the fastest growing religion on the American frontier and remained one of America's largest indigenous religious movements.² While many factors contributed to its success, one of the most important was a shift in the way Americans were coming to understand the nature of man and his relation to God. This new attitude is most succinctly put forward in the American Declaration of Independence and helps explain the movement's growth.

Written only twenty-five years before the beginnings of the Restoration Movement,³ the Declaration of Independence was a theological document as well as political. More than announcing separation from England, it offers a theological justification for rejecting the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings. This was a theory that certain kings were chosen by God to rule and that they were accountable to no person except God.⁴

Rebellion against England's King George meant that the American colonies would be arrayed against a divinely appointed government.

The American political leaders, however, understood a different principle to be at work. America was a new continent. It was as if God had provided a new Eden and given humanity a fresh start.⁵ Accordingly, they appealed to Nature and a biblical understanding of creation whereby every person bears the image of God. In creation, all are equal and have inherited certain divine rights which no king can take away. If he does, he is a despot whose disobedience to God gives the people the right to depose him.

This finds its way into the Declaration of Independence in the statement: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. . .*" The American leaders rested their case for independence and democracy on this biblical foundation.

The success of the American experiment worked to legitimize this new populist theology and move it beyond America⁶ and beyond politics. Now, the church would have to wrestle with its implications.

Twenty-five years after the Declaration of Independence, fourteen years after the Constitution was ratified, and ten years after the Bill of Rights, the Restoration Movement began. It arose in an atmosphere of religious revivalism propelled by a heady idealism about the nature of man with earnest hopes for a utopian future.⁷

The Restoration Movement reflects its dependence on the new populist American theology in the following ways: *The equal justice of God*; *The sovereignty of the individual*; and *The people's government of the church*.

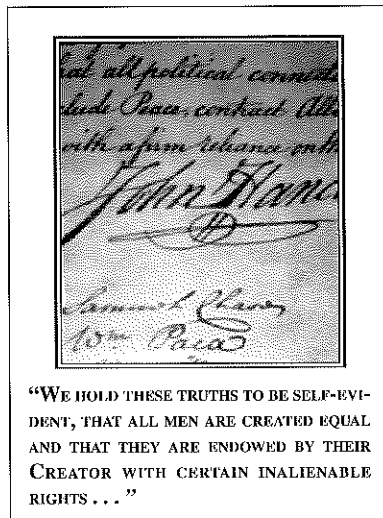
The equal justice of God. For the leaders of the Restoration Movement, God is just and rules according to immutable laws.⁸ He is neither arbitrary, capricious nor partial. Each human being has equal standing before Him and is equally amenable to His laws. Those laws are not hidden. They are revealed in a written and unchanging constitution: the New Testament. Furthermore, they are not understood through subjective human experience, but through normal objective reasoning.

The sovereignty of the individual. Since God is impartial and all humans are equal before Him, the Calvinist doctrine of election, whereby God chooses who will receive salvation, was rejected. Each person is free to participate in one's own destiny, to accept or reject salvation.

The people's government of the church. Since God is no respecter of persons, but all have equal standing, there is no separate calling or class for clergy. All are "clergy" and all are "laity." All Christians share the responsibility to promote the church and see to its good order. There is no divinely chosen hierarchy that stands over the church. The members of each congregation choose their leaders and select those who preach and teach for them. Thus, responsibility for communion, preaching and prayers was placed in the hands of the

common people.

In retrospect, although this populist theology had inherent weaknesses, it has had unsurpassed benefits. These deserve critical assessment. Yet, its original success lay in the fact that it fit easily with the American democratic spirit of independence and self-reliance, for it arose out of it. Like the new American government, it placed the church in the hands of the people, and they carried it with them as they settled the vast and rugged American west. ■



"WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL AND THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN INALIENABLE RIGHTS . . ."

¹ The Restoration Movement is the founding heritage of Churches of Christ, Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), and Christian Churches (Independent).

² Robert A. Sandercox, "Alexander Campbell" (Bethany, West Virginia, Bethany College, 2001), www.bethany.wvnet.edu.

³ See "Cane Ridge BiCentennial," *Theologia*, Winter 2001.

⁴ Richard Hooker, "Divine Right of Kings," *The European Enlightenment Glossary*, (1996, Washington State University), www.wsu.edu.

⁵ Many in early America viewed the nation as the New Israel.

⁶ The French Revolution was soon to follow.

⁷ See Nathan O. Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," *The Journal of American History*, 1987.

⁸ "Law" is meant as a scientific or objective principle.

Carson Stephens is President of Austin Graduate School of Theology. This is second in a series of Restoration articles.

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Foundation Grants Scholarships, Underwrites Hebrew Languages

A LOCAL FOUNDATION HAS GRACIOUSLY EXTENDED A GRANT TO PROVIDE scholarships to students desiring to study the Old Testament. Citing the importance that the knowledge of the most ancient scriptures is for ministers, the foundation wants to encourage even those students not preparing for the ministry to explore the Old Testament.

The foundation also agreed to underwrite the teaching of the Hebrew language. Dr. R. Mark Shipp, Pat E. Harrell Associate Professor, teaches Old Testament at Austin Graduate School of Theology and has conducted Hebrew classes as a service to those students who desired it. Hebrew will now become part of the curriculum as an elective.

"We are known in the Austin religious education community for our commitment to the study and teaching of biblical languages," said Dr. Michael Weed, faculty chair. "This underwriting will serve to enhance that commitment."

"It is very gratifying to have a foundation recognize the value of our programs," said Dr. Carson Stephens, President. "We appreciate their faith in us and their support." ■

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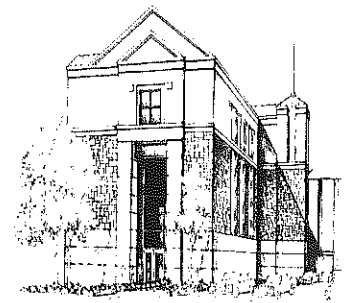
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