

MY INTELLECTUAL TRAJECTORY

David L. Bartlett

Thank you very much for inviting me. It is a great privilege and joy to see so many old friends here who can tell parts of this story better than I can. I have read a number of the Intellectual Trajectories in the two volumes that the Koerner Center shared with me, and I discovered that most of them were arranged chronologically. Soon I will arrange my story in exactly the same way. However, I want to start right in the middle of the story because there is an anecdote that poses what has been the gift but also the dilemma of my career.

In late 1975 I was the pastor of the University Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and at the same time I was an adjunct teacher at United Theological Seminary, which is a United Church of Christ seminary in the Twin Cities. Not without some forewarning, I was invited to the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport to meet with two people. One of these was Larry Greenfield, now the executive director of the Parliament of the World's Religions, but then the chair of the search committee for a new pastor of the Hyde Park Union Church near the University of Chicago campus. The other visitor was Joseph Kitagawa, who was then the dean of the Divinity School at the university.

The two of them had conspired together, inspired, I have always suspected, by James Gustafson, a former faculty member here and a member of both those Chicago communities. Larry and Joe offered me two jobs at once. I was invited to be a candidate for pastor of the church and, along with that, for as long as my tenure at the church continued, I would be invited to be a half-time member of the faculty of the Divinity School, teaching New Testament studies. I thought about it all very briefly and told them both that I'd be delighted to move to Chicago.

The combined job sounded wonderful in all kinds of ways. I accepted it partly because it sounded wonderful, and I could accept in part because I was still a bachelor and was responsible only for my own life. I was not inflicting my conflicted ambition on anyone else. Yet.

David L. Bartlett (1941–2017) was Lantz Professor of Preaching Emeritus at Yale Divinity School and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. He graduated from Swarthmore and earned M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale. An ordained American Baptist minister, he served parishes in Minneapolis, Chicago, and Oakland. Among his publications were *The Fourfold Gospel*, for which he wrote the section on Matthew; *What's Good About This News?*; the study of I Peter for *The New Interpreter's Bible*; and the twelve-volume *Feasting on the Word*, which he co-edited with Barbara Brown Taylor.

To Chicago then I came. If you fast forward about two years, I have met and married Carol Bartlett, and our first son has arrived. I was having lunch with Samuel Sandmel, who was a very wise scholar of the New Testament, a distinguished leader in American Judaism, and longtime professor at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. In his last years before retirement, he had moved to teach at the University of Chicago, and he became a very dear friend and a consistent avuncular figure in my life. In his most avuncular mode he took me out to lunch one day, and we chatted about my career and his career, and then just as we were finishing up, he said, “You know, you’re going to have to choose.”

By that he meant that I couldn’t go through my life trying to make two careers work simultaneously. I could either be a viable pastor or a viable New Testament scholar. My present life, as he saw it, was a model of ambivalent wishy-washiness. Because Sam was a man of great distinction and considerable authority, and because he was very persuasive, I said, “You’re right.” But I never did choose.

This is a sketch of a trajectory in which I did not live up to whom Sam Sandmel wanted me to be. Let me start with a prologue, a sketch of my intellectual life before I arrived at Yale Divinity School as a student, when my movement toward a bifurcated vocation really began.

I am a preacher’s kid – PK is the jargon. My father and both my grandfathers were ministers in what is now the American Baptist denomination. Those of you who live in Connecticut may have some clue about American Baptists. For more than a century we were called Northern Baptists. In Georgia, where we lived for ten years, if I tell people I am a Baptist they get terrified and check to see if there is a Trump sticker on the bumper of my car. I spent ten years trying to explain that there are different kinds of Baptists.

The kind of Baptist that I am is represented by the Baptists who founded the University of Chicago, whose Divinity School tried to bring together rigorous scholarship, Christian commitment, and a very strong orientation toward the Social Gospel, the theology that insists that Christian faith requires attention to social justice. While the University of Chicago is not so clearly Christian (or clearly not so Christian) as it was in its earlier years, that combination is still influential at that place and influential in my denomination.

The paradigmatic preacher for the kind of modernist Protestantism of my youth was Harry Emerson Fosdick, also a Northern Baptist. When I was a child we went to church on Sunday mornings and heard my father’s sermon and then sat around the radio on Sunday afternoon and heard Dr. Fosdick. Fosdick’s goal as a preacher was to try to bring the Bible out of the first century of the common era into the twentieth century. He was the bane of fundamentalists and vice versa. I think of him as a kind of spiritual grandfather, with my father as both my biological and my spiritual father.

I read Kai Erikson’s intellectual trajectory, and he and I have talked about this. My life as a son is a more modest version of his problem. His father was famous

throughout the world, and my father was famous throughout the world of Baptists. Since I lived, and still live, in the Baptist world, a good deal of the time it does not feel all that different. At seventy-five, in certain circles I will always be Gene Bartlett's son.

My father was a fine preacher. In his later years he became president of Colgate Rochester Divinity School. Though he was not a professional scholar, he gave considerable time and effort to the development of theological education.

My mother quit college, as one might more readily do in those days, in order to marry my father, and never returned to finish her degree. She was, however, highly literate, and in addition to raising five children she was devoted to good works from the first days of her marriage until she died about a year ago at ninety-seven.

The church I grew up in was the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, where my father was a pastor in the fifties and early sixties. One of the members of that church was Edgar J. Goodspeed. Goodspeed was a distinguished New Testament scholar and the first person to translate the Greek New Testament into American English. For all of his career he had been on the faculty of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago.

By the time I knew Dr. Goodspeed, he had retired and was living in Bel Air, the most exclusive neighborhood of exclusive Beverly Hills. When I went to visit him, I discovered that his neighbor on one side was Basil Rathbone and his neighbor on the other side was Lana Turner. As a young teenager I thought, "This New Testament business must not be bad." Only later did I discover that Dr. Goodspeed had married into his wealth. Those of you who know my beloved wife know that I did not follow his example.

Yet I think that in some preconscious way I began to suspect that what the man actually did – puttering around among ancient manuscripts and writing books – was interesting and maybe even gratifying. We became steady friends. When I left for college after a high school career not so much of overachieving as of overperforming, his final words to me were, "Just remember, dear boy, you don't have to run the whole place." That was 1959.

By 1979 I was on the faculty Dr. Goodspeed loved, teaching the subject he studied, and pastor of the church where he had been a member for fifty years. I had not and have not achieved anything like his prodigious scholarly contribution, but I thought and still think the old man would have been pleased.

In the Los Angeles years I went to public school, where I profited from some excellent teachers and from friendships that continue to this day. Then I entered Swarthmore. Swarthmore was the place where I discovered you could feel like King of the Hill at a good public school and then go to a good college where you were just one more former high school sovereign, and an ordinary part of a pretty good mix. I had to struggle with what has never come easy for me – humility. My teachers helped, and my fellow students helped a lot.

In my junior year I entered Swarthmore's honors program. In that program you have a major and two minors. You take two seminars a semester for the last eight semesters of your college career. There are eight or nine students in each seminar, usually meeting at the professor's home. In the last weeks of your senior year, eight professors from outside schools set exams for you in each of your seminar subjects, and then you meet with the panel of outside experts for a three-hour oral. The whole process could be kind of horrendous, and the last spring of your senior year did feel pretty much like hell.

I had always tried to get good grades because that's what you did, but somewhere in that first semester of the honors program I decided that the best reason to study all this was that it was so much fun. I have had wonderfully provocative classes and inspiring teachers at Yale over the years. But I have never had two years so utterly full of intellectual excitement. I thank Swarthmore for that.

More particularly I was an English lit major, and I discovered the joy of reading a text carefully and more than once. English lit was a very strong department at Swarthmore and still is. My adviser was the chair of the English department, George J. Becker, who wrote some very good books on European realism. He urged me to apply for a Wilson Fellowship and go on and work toward a Ph.D. I thought long and hard about that possibility and decided, I think in part to show some kind of peculiar independence, that I would go to divinity school instead. My teachers thought this was probably a sign of latent sentimentality. George Becker could not have been more supportive of me personally or more puzzled professionally. (Years later when I was a pastor in California I provided care during his last days for George Becker's uncle, one of my parishioners. After his uncle died, Mr. Becker sent a note. "It seems to me that you are doing very important work." My heart was strangely warmed.)

The clearest example of the disconnect between the standard Swarthmore trajectory and my peculiar vocational interests came on commencement weekend. I introduced my father to another excellent teacher and friend, Jerome Shaffer of the Philosophy department. Trying to be cute, I said to my father, "Mr. Shaffer has been trying to make a philosopher of me." Mr. Shaffer, not missing a beat nor noticing the implication, quickly replied in his most warm and friendly way, "You could just as well say that David has been trying to make a Christian out of me." The implication was clear. You could be a philosopher or you could be a Christian, but not both at once.

I came to Yale to begin my bachelor of divinity studies at the Divinity School, a move I have never regretted. The first year at YDS, however—and no one sitting in this room was my teacher in that first year—the classes seemed rather remote from the issues I cared about, and though the assignments were rigorous enough, I missed the smaller seminars and constant intellectual competition at Swarthmore. The greatest gift I brought from Swarthmore to Yale, however, was a love of texts. The English department at Swarthmore had been dominated by teachers very much under the influence of the "new criticism"—already not so new at Yale—and had not yet moved

to larger or at least different issues of theory. I was convinced by my teachers that there really *is* a text in the classroom. There are many different ways to address that text, and the text is not the only thing in the classroom: the readers were in the classroom, and social contexts both new and old—but the text was right there and had a right to be heard. Of course I knew this was metaphorical language; texts don't speak and readers aren't exactly listening—but it was a helpful metaphor, and is. So I brought to Yale what I also took out of it, an abiding interest in what's on the page and an abiding passion to let it speak.

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What kept me in YDS after that first somewhat disappointing year was the field-work I did. I became the student assistant at Calvary Baptist Church, whose building is now the Yale Rep. In his memoirs Robert Brustein said that it was ironic that a Baptist church had been turned into a theater, but that is because he never met my Baptist supervisor, A. King Boutwell, who was by far the most dramatic preacher I ever heard. I loved and honored the man, but to this day I can't remember much of what he said. What I do remember is that he preached without notes, marched back and forth across the platform—placed roughly where the Rep stage now stands—and at key moments leaned forward to the congregation in passionate appeal.

Another interesting thing happened on the way to the B.D. Given my interest in texts, I decided that I should take Greek in order to read the New Testament in its original language. As with any good language course I have taken, the course was hard work and not a great deal of fun, but I had a fine graduate student as teacher, and colleagues also willing to get up first thing three days a week. Somewhere about April of my second year at YDS we stopped doing exercises from the excruciatingly boring but inescapably formative little green grammar by J. Gresham Machen and opened up the turquoise copy of the Greek New Testament. And there on the page I read "*en arche en ho logos*"—*in the beginning was the Word*. Getting that close not to the beginning of creation but to the beginning of the Christian story, word for word, felt like epiphany to me, and that excitement with the text has never left.

The last thing I have to say about my Divinity School years is that I prolonged my B.D. studies by a year, so that along with my work for Calvary Baptist, the Baptist churches of Connecticut hired me to be chaplain to Baptist undergraduates at Yale. In my time with the Yale Religious Ministries I got to know Wayne Meeks and several others who have remained friends to this day.

I also fell very much under the sway of Bill Coffin. I fell under his spell because I worked with him all those years, and then after I'd finished my B.D. and moved to the Graduate School I often heard him. Somewhere along the way, and this is much more complicated than you want to hear—in the light of his preaching but not entirely persuaded by him—at least equally influenced by some of my fellow students, I joined the resistance to the Vietnam War and mailed my draft card back to the Selective Service Bureau. Bill and I talked about that at some length, and though his was not the only voice I heard, he did say to me at one point, "Bartlett, it would be good for you to

spend some time in jail.” “Thank you, Bill,” I said, but you will see why his was not the most persuasive voice.

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I did not go to jail. As it turned out, the only consequence came during Thanksgiving break when I was visiting my parents’ baronial home on the Colgate Rochester campus. Three men in plain blue suits with white shirts and monochrome ties rang the doorbell. My then six-year-old sister went to the door. They flashed their credentials: “We are from the FBI and we want to question David Bartlett.” And she said, entirely abashed, “DAVID!” Fortunately I had been well instructed by Dick Snyder, our attorney, that I was required to say not a word. I reminded the FBI of that, and they left me alone ever after. Some of my classmates were not so lucky.

The Coffin-shaped question has nagged me from that day until this: when do you speak out and when do you stand aside? When is civil disobedience the truest obedience? How does a preacher who hates conflict (that would be me) learn from a preacher who loves it (that would be Bill)?

Bill and I were never close friends, but we were steady friends until the day he died. In the last year of his life we had two really good conversations, and when I think about the people who formed my intellectual trajectory, especially as a preacher, my father and Bill and Harry Adams have pride of place.

When I finished my divinity degree, I finally did what my Swarthmore teachers advised—applied for a Ph.D. program, but in New Testament rather than English literature. I applied to several universities and went to the teacher I’d worked with most, Nils Dahl, and said, “Mr. Dahl, I wondered if you’d write a reference letter for me.” Somewhat to my dismay he replied, “Oh, this is a very bad system.” My hope for his response to my request had been rather more like, “Oh, I’d be delighted.” However, he wrote the letters and I was accepted at a few schools, of which I chose Yale for my doctoral work.

There are a number of reasons why I don’t regret choosing Yale. One important reason is that in the doctoral program I often felt far removed from the issues that had concerned me at Calvary Baptist Church and in the Yale Religious Ministries. The fact that I was still at Yale where I had many friends, both faculty and students, in the Divinity School and that I could keep attachments to Calvary Church and to Battell Chapel meant that I could be in the Graduate School without being entirely of it. I think had I gone to Harvard, which was the other very appealing option, I would not have made it beyond a year, sustained by the program alone.

So I stayed in New Haven and spent three years in residence. The most stimulating course I took was a seminar on the gospels, taught by John Schütz, and it was in that course that the shape of my dissertation began to emerge. Then John left to teach at Chapel Hill, and Nils Dahl became my adviser. I think it would have been a better dissertation had Schütz stayed. I owe a great deal to Nils Dahl. He was a great scholar, but for me, at least, he was not a model of advisory availability. In the last months of dissertation writing I was teaching in Berkeley and Mr. Dahl was on sabbatical in Oslo,

and we didn't have e-mail. So I'd stick fifty pages in a brown envelope and mail them to Norway hoping that Mr. Dahl's comments would return some time before Jesus did.

The two people who read the final dissertation were Wayne Meeks and Abraham Malherbe. They have been much more important in my ongoing intellectual growth than Mr. Dahl was, and both became not only a lifelong inspiration but lifelong friends.

My first job, as I was finishing the dissertation, was on the faculty of the American Baptist Seminary of the West and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. In my third year there it became clear that the Baptist Seminary was running out of money, and I was smart enough to know that as last hired I would almost certainly be first fired.

Before it could come to that sad ending, I started looking for other jobs. Had I been a more patient person I could have taken longer to try to find something at a seminary or university. But I am not naturally patient, and in those years I was preternaturally anxious. (I will come back to the anxiety.) Through the help of friends, I received an invitation to become pastor at the University Baptist Church of Minneapolis. The church members were my kind of Baptist, and the location in the midst of a university was my kind of setting. The congregation was full of graduate students, seminarians from nearby, and university faculty. If I was going to be a preacher it was a great place to do that. I fell in love with the congregation when I went to visit, and I love that church still, though I did not stay long and have visited only occasionally.

In addition to the appeal of this congregation, the reason I was eager to be settled was that during my years in Berkeley I became seriously depressed. I think the depression was related in part to the disappearing chapters of the dissertation, but whatever the causes, there it was: a total funk. I know that clinical depression is not technically part of anyone's intellectual trajectory, but the history, the memory of those days is always in the shadows; and even after decades there is the fear of recurrence. I think those years have been helpful to me when I deal with mental illness – either as a pastor or as an academic dean. In any case, I did not wish to engage in a lengthy search process for a teaching job. Here was a fine church that wanted me; I took the job with no regrets.

It was, however, a major turning point. It was now three years since I left graduate school, and I was no longer teaching full-time. I was, as Samuel Sandmel would probably have predicted, teaching a course a semester at the United Theological Seminary in the Twin Cities. But it was clear from then on, I think, that if I was to be the pastor I wanted to be, I might not be exactly the kind of scholar I had first intended.

For the most part, as a pastor I was not going to be the kind of scholar who could work on recovering and translating the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, because I was spending hours in the hospital with Mrs. Jones as she lay dying, and there were children to baptize and youth groups to take on camping trips. I loved to read about the Dead Sea Scrolls and even to teach about them in introductory seminary courses, but I wasn't doing the basic research any more.

Then along came Chicago, and the aforementioned dual job offer. In the Twin Cities, for the most part, the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing, but here was an offer to let me use the right hand and left hand together as part of the job description. That was not an evasion; that was the understanding. The offer felt like heaven to me at that point, and in some ways those six years were kind of heavenly. I loved that church, and I loved teaching at the University of Chicago. I loved the fact that fairly often my students and my colleagues were also my parishioners.

The most important colleague in my first months there was Norman Perrin, the British New Testament scholar. Norman was a cantankerous, somewhat egocentric, often overindulgent, lovely man who took me under his wing. His own work in biblical studies had turned toward the kind of literary criticism that tried to apply the same canons of interpretation to the New Testament that my Swarthmore teachers applied to *Great Expectations*. So another aspect of my ever bifurcated existence was that rather than choosing between the more traditional historical criticism I had learned at Yale and the more reader-oriented narrative criticism I learned at Chicago, I embraced them both.

Eleven months after I arrived in Chicago, Norman Perrin died suddenly. The loss was very hard for me personally, and very challenging for me professionally because – partly as a result of Chicago's odd separation between New Testament and Early Christianity programs – I was now, half-time and fairly young, the head of the New Testament department at the university. The two graduate programs, NT and EC, had between them about twelve students, and I inherited Norman's six. All of them worked diligently, and a few of them worked brilliantly and still do.

Then it came to pass in the midst of trying to pastor a church and run a department that I fell in love. I fell in love with one of my parishioners. Those who have been in seminary and indeed all of us who teach realize that that kind of romantic attachment to a parishioner or a student is severely frowned upon. I have two excuses. I broke the rules some years before my denomination codified them. And those of us who know my spouse know that there was never any danger that I would exert some kind of undue influence over her. The fact that I was a clergy person impressed her not a whit.

Let me say a word about the role of Carol in my life. Some of you here know her very well. All the gifts that bring joy to a marriage are present in ours. At one point I was asked at some kind of informal interview what role Carol played in my life. I said, "She's my courage." That means in part that when I get anxious about being anxious, she is there for me. But it also means that when I am thinking hard about issues of social justice, I write really good essays and preach sermons that even I find moving, and then she reminds me what I have to go do: speak up outside the comfort of the pulpit; act up; make a difference. In many ways I would not think differently apart from her, but I would act more cautiously and trim my words a little too carefully. I am deeply grateful to her for that.

We fell in love and fairly soon got married. Because we were in our thirties, within the first fourteen months of our marriage we had our first child, and within the first twenty-six months we had our second. At that moment it became clear that in some way Sam Sandmel had been right. I did have to choose, because I wasn't trying to juggle just two vocations, I was trying to juggle four – professor, pastor, husband, and father.

So now the portion of my trajectory that lived at the University of Chicago is about to come to an end. This gives me a chance to say something about the state of theology in the American academy in the last part of the twentieth century. I am in the almost but not quite unique position of having taught both at Yale Divinity School and at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. I sat in on enough lectures and co-taught enough seminars at Chicago that it was like having a second graduate education.

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I know this is unduly fascinating to almost no one, but for those of you who are not in religious studies or theology departments let me say that there is a somewhat artificial but often useful distinction made between what is called the Yale school of theology and the Chicago school of theology. I lived in them both. Let me try to make the distinction simpler than it is.

The Yale school of theology has been represented in the larger world mostly by the late Hans Frei and by George Lindbeck. The Yale school says something like this: “We are going to help you understand Christian faith by inviting you in. We know that you are out there living in a world full of puzzles and solutions and we don't pretend to take those on. We do invite you to attend to a world that is in some ways special and self-contained.”

“Here is what we have for you” (says the Yale school). “We have a text full of wonderful stories – especially the four Gospels. If you read the stories long enough and carefully enough you will discover that they end up involving you in their own narratives; you get caught up in gospel.” (That's oversimplified Frei.)

Lindbeck says something more like this: “We have a peculiar Christian culture full of all kinds of rituals and symbols, and they may seem strange to you, but if you participate in our strange habits – sing our hymns, say our creeds, eat that minimalist menu we call a Holy Feast – all that may start mattering to you.” So Lindbeck would say, “Say the prayers. Don't try to think your way into it. Don't ask me what it has to do with the deepest existential question you've got this morning, or your psychological well-being, or your philosophical presuppositions – just come join the family; start out as a guest and you may be a family member soon.” (In John Updike's story “Varieties of Religious Experience,” the protagonist loses his faith after 9/11 until at last he starts showing up at church again – not just for the *worship* but for the committee meetings and work days – and discovers that, doubts and all, he is home.)

At the University of Chicago, the leading theologians would say that all that is impossibly quaint and parochial. Chicagoans say that we meet a world full of people (often people suspiciously like Chicago faculty in other departments). These are

physicists, philosophers, lawyers, physicians who do not perceive the world the Christian way. The Christian story is not their primary story. The job of theology is to find connections between those more secular worlds and the Christian world. The world provides the issues; the divinity school helps reshape the questions and perhaps even suggests some answers.

The two schools have representative twentieth-century theologians. For Yale the theologian is Karl Barth, who never taught here, but whose ideas most of us imbibed either directly or indirectly. Barth says basically: "I'll tell you what this text says, and if you're not convinced, drop by tomorrow and I'll tell you again."

For Chicago the representative theologian was Paul Tillich, who was in fact a member of that faculty when he died. "What are your deepest questions?" asks the Chicago theologian – "Here you are doing the religious thing whether you know it or not. Let me find some common ground so that I can ease you into interest in the Christian faith."

Sometimes location is symbolic. You all know that at Yale the Divinity School is a mile from the central campus, up Prospect Street hill. At Chicago the Divinity School is right in the center of the campus. Truth is, those of us on the faculty always hoped that our centrality was more obvious to the biologists and anthropologists than it was. But we did have a fine, centrally located coffee shop in our building where many cultured despisers took advantage of the sandwiches and pastries.

At Chicago, theologians like David Tracy and James Gustafson spent a great deal of intellectual energy trying to make faith more plausible to colleagues in other fields. At Yale, to this day, I think we're more likely to say we can tell you the story as straightforwardly as possible and practice the Christian disciplines, but we know we won't talk you into it.

One of the gifts I most admire in our own David Kelsey is the appreciation he brings to both schools without really being identified with either one. He knows about the central role of tradition but also knows that we bring our own disciplines and discoveries and intellectual context to the issues of faith.

Just as I have been both professor and pastor, both literary critic and historical critic, so in a very modest way I have turned out to be both Yale school and Chicago. Some years ago, Robert Clyde Johnson, who was dean of the Divinity School during my student years, said, "I do theology like Barth, but I preach like Tillich." That is a helpful gloss on much of my ambivalent theological perspective.

To return to our story, now it is 1981 and I am married with two young sons, and I am persuaded once again that I have to choose, and this time I accept an invitation to be senior minister of the Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church in Oakland, California. In some ways the congregation was very different from the other two congregations I have served. The Oakland church is not made up primarily of intellectuals and academics. In the Oakland church there were one or two seminary professors and the head of the Philosophy department at Hayward State, but no other professional academics. There

were post office employees; there were public school teachers – most of the congregation had college degrees, but they were very much engaged in the world of business and government. They thought I was entirely puzzling for a while because I was still wrestling out loud with Chicago-like questions, which were not all that important for IRS officials or firefighters in Oakland.

Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church was and is a marvelous congregation for at least two reasons – both of them a tribute to the church’s history before I got there. It was and is an entirely racially integrated church. The only two races well represented were African Americans and Euro-Americans, but there were also a fair number of Asian Americans and a few Hispanic members and one very active Native American. After we had been at Lakeshore for two years, we took our sons on a trip to the Grand Canyon. We stopped at an Arizona restaurant for lunch and noticed that our older son, then about four, was disturbed about something. “What is it, Ben?” we asked.

“Where are all the black people?” he said. For our children, it was very strange to sit in a restaurant surrounded entirely by people with skin the same color as theirs. We never had to give them little lectures on prejudice and diversity because half of their goodly number of babysitters and honorary grandparents were African American.

The other feature of that church, still fairly unique in 1981, was that it was unapologetically a home for gay, lesbian, and transsexual folk, especially for gay, lesbian, and transsexual Baptists who did not always feel welcome in churches of our own denomination. Our children knew couples who were heterosexual and couples who were homosexual. I know that our children were not unique in that, but again we never had to have discussions about being open to all. Their church just was that.

It is also the case that I was invited to be pastor of that church in part because for some years I had been writing and speaking about making Protestant churches, and churches of my denomination in particular, more accepting of all. I had written one op-ed piece in our denominational magazine and one more scholarly discussion of biblical texts in a journal on the relationship of homosexuality to Christian texts and Christian practice. It was not my intention to make openness the theme of my ministry or my writing, but in my church at least in those days, once you spoke up you were marked for better or for worse as an advocate for that cause. For some years I was either invited or disinvited to Baptist events largely because of my public stand on this issue.

Of course, and not surprisingly, while we were in Oakland, I taught almost every semester as adjunct faculty at one of the many seminaries in the Bay area.

So now, a quick review of the trajectory before at last I come back to Yale. I have faced three decisions: scholarship or pastorate, historical biblical criticism or reader-oriented literary readings of scripture, Yale school or Chicago school of theological reflection. In all three cases I managed, however imperfectly, to resist Kierkegaard’s famous challenge “Either/Or” and doggedly answered, “Both/And.”

In 1990, persuaded by Harry Adams, I came to teach full-time at Yale Divinity School. Of course I brought with me the history of my writing. The dissertation topic

was “Exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark.” I can say rightly of that work what Lincoln said wrongly of his Gettysburg address: “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here.” My work was dependent on a kind of historical scholarship that thought we could find written sources behind the Gospel of Mark by looking for clues like rough editorial transitions. I thought I had discovered the evidences of a pre-Markan text that depicted Jesus as an exorcist gathering fellow wonder workers to follow him.

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I think I may have been right, but I’ve come to realize that not only will we never know, we will never be able to find evidence that is not only interesting but also persuasive. Here, especially in working on Mark, my own writing has shifted from the historical critical quest for sources to a reading more based in narrative criticism: what is the present text doing and why?

Being my usual conflicted self, I appended to three hundred pages of rather straightforward research a chapter on what all this might mean for the church today. And, again not surprisingly, much of my published work ever since has been a kind of mediating work between the work of rigorous scholars and the needs of working preachers. A few of my articles are just straight out critical essays. A few of my books are fairly straight out homiletical helps. But most of the books and articles are somewhere in the murky middle.

All this turned out happily for me in the Yale appointment. I think that my more rigorous scholarship was not extensive enough for me to be offered a tenured position in New Testament, and Harry Adams tells me that I probably would never have been offered tenure in homiletics had I not written all those words about the New Testament.

At Chicago, at the Graduate Theological Union, and at United Theological Seminary, I taught mostly courses on the Bible with an occasional foray into preaching. At Union Seminary Virginia, where I briefly sojourned between Oakland and New Haven, I taught mostly preaching with a nod to New Testament. Here, I happily taught preaching as my main responsibility, but with some very rewarding New Testament courses and some equally rewarding team-taught courses that did not quite fit any of the usual categories.

After I had been at Yale for two years, Tom Ogletree asked me to become academic dean to serve with him, always part-time, in administration. I took the job and stayed as academic dean for eleven years – serving with five deans, including Harry Adams as interim. I am grateful for strong relationships with all of them.

It was also the case that the academic deanship kept some of my pastoral concerns alive. At least at the Divinity School, when a student comes in with an academic problem, you soon discover that it is also a problem about identity or relationship or psychological well-being or, unsurprisingly, faith.

As my fourth dean scooted off to Colgate University to become president, I noted that I had been at this through four deanships and suggested to Rick Levin

that perhaps it was my turn. After several gracious conversations, Rick concluded that perhaps it wasn't.

At that point I needed to decide what to do with the next years of my career. I had had my fifteen years at Yale, so my retirement was fully funded, but I did not feel much like retiring. I had the suspicion that Harry Attridge, who was already a good friend and whose friendship has only grown stronger and more important in the following years, might be better served if I did not pop in weekly to tell him about everything we used to do.

At that point, quite unexpectedly, I got a call from Columbia Theological Seminary, a fine Presbyterian school in Decatur, Georgia, not coincidentally inhabited in part by several old friends. Would I like to become Professor of New Testament? In my end was my beginning. Vocationally I was back where I started. I had loved the eighteen years of teaching homiletics, but this also sounded like fun. Columbia's rigorous search process consisted of a phone call when I said, "Yes." I went for three years and stayed for nine.

As I retired from Columbia, ambivalent as always, I went to a Presbyterian church in Atlanta to serve as what they called theologian in residence, where I preached a little and taught a lot and got to act like a pastor again.

Then I was into my seventies, and it really was time to slow down. Carol and I spent hours trying to decide where to spend our retirement years – with exhaustive and exhausting research on the Internet and in person. One morning I came down for breakfast thinking that we would discuss our future again and found Carol on the computer checking out condominiums in New Haven County. "Let's go home," she said. So we did.

One last word about the undecided life. Our two sons, of course, are grown men by this time. One of them is an academic. The other is a pastor.