

FRED BERTHOLD MEMORIAL SERVICE

OCT 12, 2019

I've been asked by the members of the Religion Department to say some words on our behalf in remembrance of Fred. I'm honored to do so.

Fred came to Dartmouth in 1941 from Webster Grove, Missouri, having already been ordained in high school as a minister in the very conservative Southern Baptist Church. It's a measure of how far Fred traveled intellectually that in an interview conducted in 2008 he recounted the following conversation with fellow students from his undergraduate years:

When I came to college as a freshman, I got into an argument once on differences between men and women. . . . One of the things that I said was, well, you know one difference is that men have one fewer rib. They said, "What!" "Yes," I said, "look right here in Genesis 3, it says, 'And God took Adam and took a rib and made his Eve.' Obviously men have one fewer rib. They laughed at me. They took me up to the medical school and straightened me out.

Since there was no religion department at that time, Fred majored in Philosophy and Psychology. After completing all his graduation requirements in 1944 *summa cum laude*, he went to Chicago where in 1947 he received his Bachelor of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary and later, in 1954, a Ph.D. in Religion from the University of Chicago. These were centers of theological liberalism and contributed

to Fred's transition to the deeply Christian but theologically questioning stance he evidenced thereafter in his teaching and scholarship.

In 1949, before receiving his Ph.D., Fred returned to teach at Dartmouth. He was now married to Laura Bell McKusick, herself a minister who pastored a church in Plainfield. Larry and Fred were a remarkable couple who always supported one another through their work and through the challenges of raising their four wonderful children, Marji, Danny, Megan and Tim. I'll never forget the social occasions that Larry and Fred hosted for the department at their Carpenter Street home in Norwich. This established the model for hospitality and personal interaction that always distinguished our department.

Fred initially offered one course in religion, entitled "The Judeo-Christian Tradition." He soon offered a very popular course on "The Protestant Reformation" and somewhat later, a course on Kierkegaard based on his 1959 book *The Fear of God: The Role of Anxiety in Contemporary Thought*. In the 1990s I inherited this course, having learned so much from Fred's version and from Fred personally.

During the early 1950s, "The Judeo-Christian Tradition" and a course on "Oriental Religions" taught by Wing-tsit Chan began to attract large numbers of students. In 1952-53 for the first time, "Religion" was listed as a Department with Fred as chair. Fred served in that role from 1951 to 1967, with only a two-year break from 1960-62 during which he also served an overlapping four-year term as Dean of the William Jewett Tucker Foundation. During that period, the department grew rapidly, adding new offerings in Bible,

Church history, Judaism, and Indian Religions. This was the period that added Jacob Neusner in Judaism and Hans Penner in Indian religions to our roster. Eventually, at Fred's urging the introductory course was changed from the study of "The Judeo-Christian Religion" to the course offered for many years thereafter as "Patterns of Religious Experience," a comparative study of five major world religions. Following his retirement Fred published *God, Evil, and Human Learning*. This book challenged centuries of Christian theological defenses of evil as a necessary consequence of human free will. From 1976 to 1980, Fred served as Associate Dean of the Arts & Humanities. All this was accomplished by a lad who came to Dartmouth as a devout and unquestioning biblical literalist.

I want to conclude with two personal anecdotes.

In 1971, Mary Jean and I spent the summer in a small village in Brittany, France, where Mary Jean was busy interviewing the author who was the subject of her PhD thesis. One morning the postman delivered a telegram that said simply, "Dam Burst, Home Flooded." We were horrified, imagining that the Wilder Dam had burst and washed our newly purchased Norwich house down the Connecticut River. Happily, we soon learned that it was just a small local stream that had overflowed, and the damage was limited to lots of mud on our ground floor. But we also learned that Fred had organized a Tucker Foundation rescue group that included Sandy Curtis who is here today that cleaned things up and secured our home until we returned. That's just one small example of the many good deeds that Fred inspired in his life and in his leadership of The Tucker Foundation.

A second story comes from my first year of teaching at Dartmouth, I participated as one of several lecturers in Religion 1: The Judeo-Christian Tradition, the course pioneered by Fred. Coming straight from Harvard where I had studied with John Rawls. I chose to do one of my lectures on Rawls's theory of justice. I was terribly excited by Rawls's theory but I suspect that my lecture may have gone over many of the students' heads. Following the lecture, Fred came up to me and said, "Ron, that was adventurous. I learned something." That very kind remark buoyed me throughout my first year of teaching.

Many others in this audience can attest to Fred's kindness, his intelligence, his patience, and his utter decency. We will miss him—always.