

Editor's Introduction

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It's hard to overstate the importance the presence of Dr. Christopher Morse on Union Theological Seminary's campus over the last several decades has had. The variety of articles in this special double issue of *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* suggest this immense importance in all the diverse ways it has been felt. Dr. Morse has served as a professor, a mentor, a preacher, and a pastor to many people who have come in and gone out Union's doors.

The articles contained within are roughly divided into sections that reflect these different roles as well as the different key aspects of Dr. Morse's work, both in the past and present. Anyone who has taken the foundational ST 104 class during his tenure at the seminary will recognize their own experience in that class and, hopefully, fondly remember their own experiences of working through doctrines, doing dogmatics as the work of "faithful disbelief," and perhaps most of all, constructing an *utrum* paper. The latter is represented within, both explicitly as well as implicitly in form: indeed, it's an exercise and a way of thinking that is critical to develop in order to have a well reasoned stance on the important issues, historically and contemporarily, in the church and theology. Alongside articles done with ST 104 clearly in mind are ones that reflect Dr. Morse's lifelong work on the importance of eschatology, including his recent excellent work on questions of heaven. How these themes affect the project theologians are called to do are raised in particular, with respect to ecclesiology, interreligious work, and liberation. Finally, many articles reflect the personal influence Dr. Morse has had on people in a way that can only be experienced in person: his quick wit and humor, easy but gentle dropping of bible quotes, and consistent passion for the work he does and the people it affects.

As a current Ph.D. student I still encounter Dr. Morse frequently on the sidewalk, on a walk or errand from the apartment he moved to from Union, which is nearby. His work certainly is not finished, and he often speaks of being as busy now as he was while teaching at Union. Each time I run into him it's a fresh reminder of why the skills I learned in ST 104 are so important and why I'm excited to be a Teaching Fellow for ST 104's current professor for the class this spring semester. For many it is a first encounter with the systematic engagement with the traditional doctrines of the Christian church. And this is definitely no easy task for a professor given the characteristic critical eye Union students consistently bring to their work in theology. Yet Dr. Morse has routinely won over new generations of students by offering a rigorous framework to understand the doctrines as they've been constructed as well as challenge and revise them.

The profound way in which he affects his students and prepares them for their theological careers is easily observed in the achievements of the contributors to this festschrift. Many are accomplished pastors in churches across the

country and world, while others are academics at various points in their careers: current Ph.D. students at schools all over, new professors, tenured professors who are making their own contributions to the education of future generations of theologians, academic administrators, and everywhere in between. The affection all of them feel for Dr. Morse is apparent in every single article, both in their moments of admiration of Dr. Morse's ideas as well as their gentle critiques and reconstructions. The tone of their engagement with Dr. Morse's work reveals their appreciation of his influence on their thought and careers; the appropriation of his ideas shows that he has constructed a project that will continue for generations through the work of his admirers; and finally, their commitment to participating in this volume, which has taken much work and patience on behalf of all parties, demonstrates how essential it is to all of them that Dr. Morse's work be celebrated and appreciated widely.