

Remarks on the Retirement of Professor Howard Eugene Hunter

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Howard Hunter was born in Lima, Ohio, in 1929. After high school in Leipsic, Ohio, he attended Ohio Northern University on a scholarship, achieving a Bachelor of Science in Education, *summa cum laude*, in 1950. Then he went to Ohio State, again on scholarships, to pursue an MA in English. His Master's thesis in 1952 was on the religious sentiment of Henry David Thoreau. Moving on to the School of Theology at Boston University, Howard completed a Bachelor of Sacred Theology in 1954, and was ordained a Methodist minister in the same year, having already served for a year as Probationer with a congregation in Fairhaven on Cape Cod. Howard went on for still more graduate study at B. U., which culminated in a Ph.D. in 1957. His dissertation was a biographical study of William Fairfield Warren, the systematic theologian who was a founder and the first President of Boston University.

That same year of 1957 turned out to be a still more momentous year for Howard; he and his fellow minister Doris Leenhouts were married, and he received his initial appointment at Tufts, continuing until 1961 as Assistant Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Theology. Howard and Doris watched over the congregation in Fairhaven until 1958; later, they were co-ministers of the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Rockport, for 18 years until 1992.

In 1961, Howard moved back to his recent alma mater, Boston University; he taught in the School of Theology for six years, serving also as Director of Admissions. Returning to Tufts as Associate Professor of Religion in 1966, Howard was appointed Chairman of the department two years later. That time coincided with the disestablishment of the Crane School of Theology in 1968, which had once flourished with seven professors, and the temporary fortification of the Religion Department, which had a faculty of four full-time. In 1974, Howard was promoted to Professor. Beginning in that same year he served a three-year stint as Director of The College Within, a predecessor of today's Experimental College and one of Tufts' most distinctive models in alternative interdisciplinary education during the turbulent years of the Vietnam War.

In 1990, with the retirement of Professor Miller, Howard remained at Tufts as the only full-time member of the Religion Department, carrying the departmental burden himself with overloads, and with occasional assistance from part-time lecturers. Howard's broad experience as well as his particular interests enabled him nevertheless to

provide a rich spectrum of course offerings, usually three different courses each semester, for an entire generation of Religion majors at Tufts; in some years there were as many as thirty religion majors. Howard's Introduction to Religion course was a fruitful beginning for many who went on to further study in Contemporary Religious Thought, Major Religious Doctrines, Religious Motives in Contemporary Arts and Literature, and Intellectual History of Christianity, as well as in more specialized courses in Asian religions and a seminar in the medical, ethical, philosophical and religious aspects of death and dying.

Howard's own publications in these areas included a book, *Humanities, Religion and the Arts, Tomorrow*, published in 1972, and *Moral Problems in the Nurse-Patient Relationship*, 1983. And in 1974, in a volume called *Utopia / Dystopia*, Howard and his wife together published a chapter with an intriguing title: "Siddartha and A Clockwork Orange: Two Images of Many in Contemporary Literature and Cinema." Howard's long list of publications additionally includes over 30 articles and 20 reviews, and even a script for a Japanese film, *The Snows of Uonoma*, in 1982.

Of course, when one is minister to a congregation, one's scholarly writing leads one into overlaps with timely topics for sermons; at one time or another Howard spoke at over a hundred New England churches. One of his favorite topics was "Tomatoes and Transcendence," in which present-day horticulture of the tomato, gene-manipulated for the convenience of the grower and shipper far more frequently than for the taste and health of the consumer, became a paradigm for our own dystopia.

All of this varied activity as a writer on many different religious topics is testimony to Howard's worldwide travel experience, beginning in 1958 when he was a member of the Institute for Theological Studies at Oxford. In the 1960's he traveled around Europe and visited Israel; in 1970 he was Visiting Research Fellow in Kyoto at Doshisha University Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, and in 1976 was an invited participant at a conference at the Vatican. Further studies took Howard to Romania, London, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Belgium, China, Thailand, Bali, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and India.

Howard's activities will speed up, not slow down, with his retirement, beginning with a planned trip to India in January, another to Turin in Italy in September to deliver a paper, and continuing with his ongoing research on minority religions in Europe and Asia. Howard and Doris will also spend time with their daughter Amy and son Bruce and three granddaughters, including plenty of time for playing piano duets. All of us hope, too, that Howard will return early and often to survey the flourishing Department of Religious Studies, which he nurtured successfully through so many decades of change, and which is his own best monument at Tufts.

Mr. President, I move that we rise in appreciation of Professor Hunter's dedicated service at Tufts, and that these remarks be spread on the Minutes of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, with a copy to be provided to Professor Hunter.