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## Interview with David Hopper, James Wallace Professor of Religious Studies

David Hopper

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Macalester College Archives, DeWitt Wallace Library  
*Oral History Project*

**Interview with:**        **David Hopper**  
                                  **James Wallace Professor of Religious Studies, 1959-2001**

**Date:**                    **Tuesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, 1:00p.m.**

Place:                    Macalester College DeWitt Wallace Library, Harmon Room  
Interviewer:            Laura Zeccardi, Class of 2007

Edited interview        1:30:12 minutes  
run time:

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**Subjects**

02:25	Personal background and coming to Macalester First courses taught for Religious Studies requirements DeWitt Wallace's interest in Macalester
06:20	Faculty retreats and curriculum changes
09:38	1960s and 1970s Vietnam War, EEO, President Arthur Flemming, Hubert Humphrey Inner College, curriculum revisions and dropping of requirements, Department changes
17:04	Financial crisis
19:13	Faculty sense of community on campus Faculty lounge and later loss of, in Campus Center, Old Main Growth in College's reputation
24:43	Impact of 1960s unrest on religious life at Mac Relationship between Chaplains and Religious Studies Department
28:44	Change in geographic distribution of students
30:05	Intersection between College's growing reputation and dropping of requirements, like required Biblical Studies
33:18	Teaching Biblical Studies though not area of expertise
34:52	Personal research and writing

39:50	Publication and tenure
41:11	Early hiring procedures
42:41	Campus atmosphere with numerous young faculty
44:34	Student involvement in Department business, January Interim
48:17	Interim
49:05	Teaching style, impact of being an ordained minister
52:37	Existentialism course, changes due to computers
1:00:07	Impact of technology, technology in Western culture
1:04:04	“Man and His World” course, tvs in classrooms
1:07:52	ACTC, students from other schools, getting to know other faculty
1:11:25	Changes in student body
1:17:26	Changing role of religion at Mac
1:18:19	Major policy changes: curriculum, internationalism
1:20:01	Student issues in the 1980s and ‘90s
1:20:45	Decrease in student activism
1:21:42	Relationship with Macalester today
1:22:35	Other current activities: Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
1:25:17	Favorite memories or times: faculty pool room, Macalester football

**Interview with David Hopper**

**Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer**

**May 22, 2007  
Macalester College  
DeWitt Wallace Library  
Harmon Room**

LZ: My name is Laura Zeccardi, and I am a new graduate of Macalester College, conducting interviews for the Macalester Oral History Project. Today is Tuesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, and I am interviewing David Hopper, Professor of Religious Studies in the Harmon Room, in the DeWitt Wallace Library. Alright, well if you can just start by stating your name, and where you were born, and how old you were when you first came to Macalester.

DH: OK. My name is David Hopper. I'm an East Coast person, born and bred in the state of New Jersey. Served briefly in World War II, at the end of the war. Was educated at Yale, then went to Princeton Seminary, in Princeton, New Jersey. A Presbyterian seminary. And I continued there for my Ph.D. work, which I completed in 1959. In June of '59. And I was then in the market for a teaching position. I was contacted by a faculty friend at Princeton Seminary who heard that the Chair of the Religious Studies Department at Macalester was in town, looking for a one-year replacement for his position. He was moving on from the Chair of the Department at Macalester, to become Chair at Syracuse University. I had an interview with him. And he called me once he got back to St. Paul, and offered me the job over the phone. No search committee, no nothing. Just a one-year replacement for him. He offered to pay the cost of my trip out to see the College, if I wanted to do that. But he said, "You'll save the College money if

you don't come out at all." So I came in the Fall, September, never having seen the College. And only once having seen the Twin Cities earlier—that was on a Navy troop train in '45. So...it took off from there.

[02:25]

Most of our department courses at Macalester then were designed to meet a Religious Studies requirement, with the burden of the requirement in Biblical Studies. Most were two credit courses, and every student had to have eight credits of religion to graduate. Two credit courses, spread over four years. And six of those were to be in Biblical Studies. I was not trained in Biblical Studies. So the first two years were very hectic for me. I was very busy; I must have had three sections, two sections of Old Testament, one section of New Testament—and two other two credit courses. We had a teaching load of I think eight, no, twelve hours a week. Twelve hours a semester, with maybe a reduced load the second semester. So that's how things started. I spent most of my time, from '59 through '70/'71 teaching Biblical Studies courses. Again, that was not my field of specialty. I did get to teach some theology courses, which was my field, but those were infrequent. For my first semester at Macalester, at the beginning of the term, the College had a faculty retreat up North, at a very impressive lodge—Rutgers Bay Lake Lodge, it was called. And that was either the first or the second such retreat. It was underwritten by DeWitt Wallace, trying to upgrade the faculty, involve them in the changes that were coming, because he had decided to invest in the College on a major scale. That came about as the result of a book, written by the former chair of the religion department of Macalester College, Edwin Kagin. He wrote a book, a biography of James Wallace of Macalester. That book was published in '57. DeWitt Wallace read that manuscript, and wrote a forward for the book. It is that book that triggered his interest in doing something for the College. There he read in the biography of

James Wallace about the struggle that his father had had in keeping the doors of the College open. There were times that he wasn't sure that he had enough coal to heat the buildings during the Depression years. It was a very painful, tenacious commitment to Macalester, on the part of his father, that prompted DeWitt Wallace to commit himself to the College. He then began to underwrite significant investments in the College.

[06:20]

That first faculty retreat for me in the Fall of '59, was devoted to questions on how the College might change in the future with new financial resources. My second retreat, not as extravagant as the first, but still underwritten by DeWitt Wallace, was devoted chiefly to a revision of the curriculum, or changes in the structure of the college. Those changes occurred in '62/'63. Macalester dropped many of its vocational courses, and became a pure liberal arts college, with all courses equivalent, four credit courses. We used to have a requirement of one hundred, I think it was one hundred twenty-six credits to graduate. That's where our Religious Department two credit courses contributed to a final total. The changes began in '63/'64, and '65. The College also brought on new faculty. It went into the market to compete for the best faculty available in all disciplines. When I came to Macalester there were only, I think it would be fair to say, three or four members of the faculty who were published. The administration brought in, a former chair of the Philosophy Department at the University of—I think it was Maryland, Louis Garvin, who served as the new dean, the provost. His vision was marked in one of his speeches on "Steeple of Excellence." Money was now there to do this sort of thing. Much of this change came as a result of Edwin Kagin's book, and the interest it stirred in DeWitt Wallace. These major changes came on during the mid-'60s and resulted in a major upgrade in the quality of the faculty, younger faculty people, who could have gone elsewhere, but were attracted to the

school and the growing vision of the school. The teaching market was tight at that time also. That's how I came to be hired. I was lucky. I had just finished my Ph.D. degree, and was contacted on this special occasion for a replacement position. Positions were hard to find, especially in Religious Studies. The College grew apace during the mid-'60s.

[09:38]

Then there were the troubled years of the Vietnam War, plus a program introduced by the president who succeeded Harvey Rice, Arthur Flemming. Perhaps one of your other interviewees has spoken of the EEO Program, Expanded Educational Opportunities Program, which was very nice in conception and worthy of attention, but lacked financial undergirding. I served on the advisory council, which helped inaugurate that program. We had early morning breakfast sessions with Arthur Flemming when the program was set up. But none of us knew for sure that there would be monies forthcoming from external sources to help underwrite the program. As a result, over the course of two or three years, a major financial crisis ensued. This came along with the chaos of the Vietnam years and student protests. After the election of '68, the national election that Hubert Humphrey lost to Richard Nixon, Humphrey was given a joint appointment at Macalester and the University of Minnesota. The anti-war sentiments were such that one group of students on the campus brought in a bale of barbed wire and put it in the hallway in front of Hubert Humphrey's office. It was a tense situation. It was a difficult time for the faculty, trying to teach in that situation. Students were not inclined to listen to any kind of authoritative figure. Open discussion was favored over lecture. And in one case, the students initiated a self-appraisal program, called I think, "Inner College," where they would invite faculty in to give seminars on subjects they chose. Then they would grade themselves, assign grades for themselves. That lasted a year and a half maybe. Then they seemed to have decided

they weren't getting anything out of the program, and let it drop. But also there were sit-ins at a number of faculty meetings. This went on into the early '70s. Then in '71, I think I was on leave at the time, there were major revisions of the curriculum in terms of requirements. Languages were dropped, physical ed was dropped. Freshman English was dropped, a Religious Studies requirement was dropped. That forced many departments, especially those affected by those decisions, to revise their curricula. The Religious Studies Department did not know just what kind of demand there would be for its established offerings. In that first year we decided to continue with our emphasis on Biblical Studies. In that year, there was a significant drop in our enrollment. At the same time, the College was forced to deal also with a major financial crisis. This resulted in no small part from the expenses that had been associated with the EEO program. To underwrite that program, the college spent perhaps six or seven million dollars of a very limited endowment of perhaps nineteen, maybe twenty million dollars. I don't know the exact figure. This whole situation brought about the resignation or firing of President Arthur Flemming who was replaced by James Robinson. Robinson lasted perhaps a year and a half or two years and then moved on. There was a lot of chaos during his tenure with a cutback and firing of faculty and staff people. Our Department was cut back from five or six people to about three. We used to have part-time, other members of the faculty who would teach particular courses in our Department. Hugo Thompson from the Philosophy Department taught Social Teachings of the Bible, and Yahya Armajani from the History Department regularly taught Religions of the World, the latter a very popular course. That was part of our tradition at the time going back to the Charles Turck administration. But after that year, we had only three people full-time in the department. One in Biblical Studies, one in Asian Religions, and one in Christian thought. The latter was my position. And we moved on from there. We lost contact



with a significant portion of the student body because of the lost requirement. We were forced to compete in a student marketplace. It was then that we began to offer a real Religious Studies major, even though we were limited in faculty numbers. With this new division of labors we could concentrate on areas where we each had our expertise. We did well over the subsequent years, and gradually regained a couple of positions in the Department. I think we ended up with five sometime in the '80s. These were difficult years that the College went through, but they were also successful years.

[17:04]

DeWitt Wallace cut off funds for the College in the early '70s, which precipitated the financial crisis along with indebtedness incurred by the EEO Program and the loss of endowment monies. DeWitt Wallace, you no doubt have heard from others, was disaffected by the student unrest on campus. It occurred across the country, but also at Macalester. He refused to underwrite any more indebtedness. Previously he would cover two or three hundred thousand dollar deficits in the college budget every year. He refused to do that anymore. Refused to underwrite significant programs. And he essentially cut off his support to the college. Then came John Davis as President. That must have been '74 or '75, sometime, I forget the precise date. John Davis did a wonderful job of turning the college around. He was able over some years, three, five years, to win back the support of DeWitt Wallace. And the college took off again, from that point on. President Gavin came in after Davis and got to spend much additional monies that were provided for the rebuilding on the campus and new instructional programs. That's a brief history, as I lived it and imprecisely recall it. I took early retirement in '97, full retirement in 2000. And I haven't been deeply involved in the College since then. There are many things about the early experience at Macalester that I cherish.

[19:13]

In my early experience of Macalester, there was a sense of common commitment to the college as an institution, a family kind of atmosphere. Potluck suppers and all those kinds of things. Generally the whole faculty would show up for an evening special lecture. There was a warmth about that relationship that just kind of dissipated over the years and has become more of a professional relationship at all levels. There are continuing strong loyalties to the college of course, but more emphasis upon professionalism and academics as such. This was part of what happened with the national recruitment of faculty and the “publish or perish” business. Another feature of the early Macalester was a faculty sharing I wouldn’t call it a faculty club, but in the old Student Union there were two lounges, a men’s faculty lounge and a women’s faculty lounge. The men’s faculty lounge had a pool table in it, and when I came to Macalester, I used to just sit and watch my faculty colleagues call their shots. They’d bring their own bag lunch, faculty people, or they’d get a tray in the basement cafeteria and bring it up to the lounge. Then we’d argue politics or whatever. The make-up of the group was from all divisions. There was a faculty group that was chiefly interested in tennis, not billiards. Harvey Rice was a tennis player. And that was a special group. Some felt they were a little elitist. Perhaps not fair. There were some good people in the group. The Assistant Chaplain was there, a good friend of mine. Henry West also played tennis with the President. The pool players looked at the tennis players as in “in group”. The President never came to the faculty lounge. And he wouldn’t have known what to do with a cue stick. We were part of a different group. Earthy people, good people. And argued politics. That was a very warm tradition. And then one summer, it must have been in the late ‘60s, the East Wing of Old Main was condemned as not safe. The *Mac Weekly* had its offices at the time on the fourth floor of the East Wing. They were ordered to move. The faculty

with offices in the East Wing were told they couldn't store their books there anymore because the walls were drawing apart. So the Dean of Students decided, the administration decided, to take over the faculty lounge and house the *Mac Weekly* in the faculty lounge. Gone was our pool table, gone was our faculty "club". The faculty lost a great deal when they eliminated the pool room. We would have fifteen people, ten to fifteen people every day at noontime—shoot the breeze, argue, pose questions. It had an atmosphere of real mutual regard and exchange that just disappeared. It was never replaced. Efforts to restore a faculty lounge...without a pool table failed to generate great thoughts. That was a loss. But those years had much to be said for them. When I first came to Macalester in 1959, it was chiefly an Upper Midwest college. Then it became over the years a national college, in recruiting and every other way. That was a major change. The quality of the students greatly improved, and the faculty had an increasingly national reach in scholarly research and publications. Mac's reputation as a very good liberal arts college continued to grow over the years. This in spite of the upset of those Vietnam years.

[24:43]

LZ: Do you feel like the, kind of the unrest of the 1960s had an impact on religious life at Macalester? It kind of seems like...

DH: Well, yes and no. I mean, during those years, the Church was also very much in the anti-war business. And the Chaplain at the College was also anti-war at the time. So those doors were kept open. But as the quality of the academic nature of the discipline was upgraded in religious studies, a separation developed between what the Chaplains Office was doing and what the Religious Studies Department was doing. One is an academic discipline, the other is a

pastoral commitment. When I first came to Macalester, the Chaplain and the Assistant Chaplain taught courses in the Religious Studies Department, though neither of them had a Ph.D. or its equivalent. That was the pattern at the time. One of the issues that arose in the Religious Studies Department was a perceived need to change the level and scholarship of the teaching in the Department, and the textbooks used in department courses. When I was hired, the previous Chairman—who actually hired me—Lee Jamison, had the duty of upgrading the texts in all of the Biblical Studies courses, bringing them up to the level of other top liberal arts schools in the area of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. There were tensions in the department when those changes came along. A colleague of Jamison in the Department by the name of Norman Gibbs aided in this transition. Such tensions in the Department were much in evidence when I was hired. In my second year at Macalester, because of these frictions, I ended up as Chair of the Department, in an administration move to stay the turmoil. This did right itself after a while. But the relationship between the religion department and the Chaplain's office was more sharply defined during those years, though a goodly measure of cooperation in some areas continued. We still had compulsory chapel. When I came, the Religion Department was often asked to offer the opening prayer at faculty meetings, a practice that disappeared four or five years after I arrived. At that time there was no drinking on campus, especially at official college functions.

[28:44]

Many of the student body at that time of my arrival in 1959 and the early '60s came from families in which they were first to have gone on to higher education. Many came from farming backgrounds. The five state area, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, provided most of our students. With the changes brought on by the efforts to improve the quality

of education at Mac, recruitment of students became nationwide. A more sophisticated student body and faculty developed from these changes and a gradual erosion of the college's church relationship and church commitment also followed. Macalester became a much more secular school, though we maintain an office of Chaplain. It's designation and character as a Presbyterian Church-related college continues, but largely informally.

[30:05]

LZ: Did the dropping of kind of the religious aspect, the requirement to take a course, and the dropping of Biblical Studies, did that have an impact on how Macalester wanted to be viewed as more a nationally prominent school?

DH: That was an internal thing that came about also as a result of the upset of the Vietnam years and the rejection of requirements. Around 1970 most general requirements were dropped—in Freshman English, foreign languages, religious studies, etc. The sciences held on to their departmental requirements. If you were majoring in chemistry or physics, you were going to have to take prescribed courses, period. But Religious Studies had to open itself to the market, and play the market game with the student body. We had to try to design courses that would draw students. Here we were able over the years to offer enough courses, and have people in the Department who were attractive enough as teachers to achieve rising enrollments. Up to '70/'71 I was teaching mostly Biblical Studies courses, Old and New Testament courses. But after the requirement in Biblical Studies was dropped the Department diversified its offerings in other aspects of religious studies. I introduced a number of courses which were much more in my area of expertise, courses such as: Science and Religion, Technology and Ethics, Twentieth Century

Christian Thought. One of the courses we introduced was a course on Existentialism: Atheistic and Theistic Existentialism, which was well-received and was a regular Fall offering of the department. I used to have a class of about thirty students every Fall semester. We also offered seminar courses on The Thought of Søren Kierkegaard and The Political Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr. And Calvin Roetzel in Biblical Studies did the same. He offered specialized courses in The Thought of the Apostle Paul, along with revised New Testament courses and seminars. The department was also able to update its offering Jewish studies with new persons added to the staff.

[33:18]

LZ: What was it like for you as someone who had not had any teaching experience, coming to Macalester and then teaching Biblical Studies, which was not your field of interest?

DH: It meant a lot of work [laughter]. I was running from my desk to the classroom with a new lecture in an area that I was not...entirely comfortable. Students tell me I didn't look a lot at the faces in the class. I would stare up at the ceiling and the light fixtures a lot. Partly this was because I was not at ease in the subject matter. My lectures were mostly written out. In fact I wrote jokes into the lectures, as well. That was awful. It was also fun, too. There were satisfactions.. We got along pretty well. But when I got to teach in my own field, in the area in which I was doing my own writing and things, teaching became more interesting. In pursuing my own research I never could write and teach at the same time. I did most of my writing during the summer, or on sabbaticals. Some faculty people can teach and write at the same time. I couldn't ever comfortably do that.

[34:52]

LZ: What type of writing, and kind of work were you involved in personally?

DH: Well, my first book was a study of Paul Tillich, who was a major figure in twentieth-century Christian thought. He came from Europe, was kicked out of Germany, lost his university position in Germany when the Nazis came to power. People at Union Seminary in New York City heard about Tillich's situation and offered him a position in '33. He accepted and came to the U.S. with virtually no English. He was largely unknown in the U.S. until after World War II, when he became a major figure on the American theological and intellectual scene. When he retired from Union in the late '50s, he subsequently went to Harvard as a university professor. When he reached the age limit there, he went to the University of Chicago also as a university professor. He was a very well received representative of the German theological and philosophical traditions. He was also rather mystifying to American audiences, not schooled in the German idealism of Kant, Hegel and Schelling. He was nevertheless a fascinating figure on the American scene. I wrote a book on him in 1967, trying to come to terms with him myself. Then, after that book was finished, we got into the Vietnam years. During those years Americans were attracted by the figure of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who had taken part in the plot to assassinate Hitler. He was part of a German military intelligence group that framed most of the conspiracies against Hitler from within Germany itself. He was executed by the Nazis in 1945, shortly before the end of the War. But he left behind a series of provocative theological letters. In the American situation, during resistance to Vietnam, Bonhoeffer's resistance to the Nazis became a model. There were numerous parallels that were drawn between the proto-fascist

image that many Americans had of the Nixon years, the later Vietnam War years, and what Bonhoeffer had struggled against in Germany. He was also a very important example in the struggle in South Africa against apartheid. I wrote my second book on Bonhoeffer. Since I could not track a clear line of theological development in Bonhoeffer's works, I wrote *A Dissent on Bonhoeffer*, published in 1976. I authored the two monographs on Tillich and Bonhoeffer; and then I wrote a third book in the early '90s, on some of my continuing interests on the development of Christian thought within the rise of modern Western thought and the scientific revolution. I continue to interest myself in the role religion may have played in the rise of the modern secular Western cultural tradition. I published the book *Technology, Theology, and the Idea of Progress* in 1991.

[39:50]

LZ: Did your ability to write and then get those writings published have an impact on your tenure, your process to getting tenure.

DH: Have an impact on what?

LZ: Your tenure process.

DH: Yes. When I finished the first book in 1969, I was given tenure right away. Certainly the granting of tenure and publication became more and more the expected pattern in the mid-1960s. But among earlier hires and promotions there was less stress on publication.



[41:11]

LZ: Was that typical of other, did you know other professors that had kind of followed...

DH: Or sure, sure. There were a lot of strange hires in the early years under President Turck. One of my early friends was Fred Stocker, in Chemistry. We used to eat breakfast together. He was always looking at the stock market pages of the daily paper. We would eat breakfast in the college cafeteria. I was always impressed with people who spent time reading the stock market pages. He was hired fresh from his Ph.D. I think out of the University of Colorado. He was hired right off as an Associate Professor. No Assistant Professorship. He just came in as an Associate Professor, with no previous teaching experience. And Yahya Armajani, is reported to have been hired on a train as a result of a chance encounter with President Charles Turck. Charles Turck hired Yahya Armajani without even gaining the approval of the History Department. It was a different pattern early on. But all that disappeared under Lou Garvin when everything was formalized and regular procedures were introduced.

[42:41]

LZ: What was that like, the atmosphere, with having so many young out of graduate school professors?

DH: Well, they were a very interesting group. And they took a lot of initiative at that point. We lost when we cut off the vocational kinds of courses. Why we had a school of nursing, we had medical technology, we had secretarial studies, we had accounting. All of those courses, all those people, all got cut off in '62, '63, '64. And these other people were coming in, strictly

liberal arts people in their different disciplines, political science, sociology, anthropology. And it was such a rapidly changing situation that it was hard on the older faculty and those that lost their jobs. Then we had the other crisis, the financial crisis, that came later on, too. Many people took retirement because it meant that younger people could stay on when they would ordinarily lose their positions. We had fifteen or so faculty and administrators fired during those years. Decisions were made by a faculty-administrative committee called the “Cut Committee”—that was in ’70, ’71/’72. This was a difficult period. Some enmity and anger persisted in the College as a result of what were perceived to be injustices at the time.

[44:34]

LZ: Were students ever involved in that, did they take an interest...

DH: There were efforts to structure some student participation in the College at the time.

Departments were required to have student representatives at their regular meetings. I think that continues in some departments. There was still a lot of departmental autonomy in how those questions were dealt with. In our department when we moved from simply servicing a requirement to offering a major were developed relationships with students which are quite different from what used to be the case. The Interim term is an issue I think you suggested in your notes. That was a great loss for me. I valued the Interim term, and was part of the faculty group that helped set up the Interim term—with Walter Mink and a couple of other people. It was decided to develop the Interim as a pass/fail program, to avoid the pressure of grades and encourage exploration of new subject matter. I found it appealing because I was able to explore subject matter in which I was interested and might have appeal to students. I taught some

courses that way which I really enjoyed; teaching, reading, and learning with the students. I pursued my interest in Existentialism with a second well-received Interim course. This allowed me to broaden the base of readings in Kafka, Heinrich Böll, and Kurt Vonnegut. That was great fun, as well as stimulating. College-wide pressures for the faculty to be successful academically kept building over time. The younger faculty were caught-up in the pressure to publish and many lost interest in the Interim term. They wanted the time for themselves—the month of January—to do their own scholarly work. Gradually we lost faculty support for the Interim term. I count it a loss for our liberal arts tradition, leading to increasing specialization and vocational kinds of commitment. We lost something when we lost the Interim term. At least it was such for me.

[48:17]

LZ: When Interim was dropped, were you able to find other opportunities to work that closely with students?

DH: Well, yes. I mean, we could all offer our seminar courses, offer individualized teaching experiences, tutorials and things like that. We could do that. But the incentive to think up something new or interesting on the fringes of your discipline, to build bridges to some other disciplines. This lost the established occasion provided by the Interim.

[49:05]

LZ: I'm curious, because you're an ordained minister, and how that impacted your teaching style and just your overall...

DH: I feel that really didn't affect my teaching style much at all. I carried over into my teaching the experience chiefly of my undergraduate school. I largely followed the style of professors at Yale: what they did, I kind of did, too. Over the past three or four weeks or five weeks, however, I have renewed acquaintance with an old seminary friend who teaches New Testament at Luther Seminary. Though retired, he's teaching a course on hermeneutics which I find quite interesting. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, the interpretation in this case of scripture. It's a very complex exploration of method in the interpretations of ancient writing, the original context of the writing and how this takes on life, if it takes on any life at all, in new and different historical situations. I suppose this reflects something of my vocational commitment to ministry, but it is also a very academic inquiry. This old friend of mine from Princeton Seminary, he was working on his Ph.D. there when I was still working on my Master of Divinity degree. But we were in the same eating club together. And he was, had a keen sense of humor. And this continued. It was so fun to see him, kind of spark... He's older than I am, but was still a very lively, humorous, glimmers there... But he wasn't structured in terms of his lectures, in the way that I was. I would teach with that, I would put an outline on the board with all of the major subjects that, before I lecture. He would come up with his outline in the middle of his lecture somewhere, and you weren't quite sure how he would start it out, and how all this fit together. If he had only written that out on the board to start with, he could hold himself to that discipline. So those little techniques you pick up. That served me very well. From my college, my undergraduate experience, and I did fall in love with the lecture. A lecture approach to the subject. But I always invited questions and interruptions of the lecture, all the time. But [unclear] didn't always happen. But I always felt that lectures, if they raised questions, those

questions have to be answered at the time the questions are raised in peoples' minds. But sometimes students don't feel free to interrupt. Embarrassed to ask a question, those kinds of things.

[52:37]

But I learned a, someone somewhere at a professional meeting told me of a particular technique that I found interesting, when I was just setting up. After we had dropped the old Biblical Studies requirement, I was thinking about this course in existentialism. He told me of a technique he had that worked very well so that you could have a larger group in attendance in class and have a lot of discussion at the same time. And this is what I used in the Existentialism course. It's a fairly complicated arrangement. We met one day a week, on Monday evenings. We had for the course eleven books that we were going to read. Two by Sartre, three by Camus, [unclear] and Kierkegaard, and all those. And there would be eleven books, and we would have about...maybe...at least two students or three students would sign up for one book and write a major paper on that book. And that would be their major paper for them, for the semester—ten, eleven pages. And it would be an analysis of the existential character of the writing. And they would ask the question, "What kind of world does this person describe, and what kind of human resources are called to live in that world?" That was just a broad outline. So, "What's existential about this writing?" And those papers, those people who had to write those papers, would put that on reserve on Friday. By noontime, Friday, in the Library. Right down here, around the corner. And all the students would have to read the book and read the paper that was written as an interpretation of the book, and write a two page critique of each of the two papers for class time on Monday. So when we met our class, all had read the book, by and large, most had read the book. Most had read the paper interpreting the book. And most had invested their own kind

of analysis in their critique of the papers. So they'd bring their own reading to bear on the paper. And we never had any trouble with discussion and questions and answers and discussion took place all across the class. In a class of twenty-five or thirty. But you know, towards the end of my teaching, in '97, that technique was getting done in by the computer. The College didn't want to put five copies of each paper on reserve. Didn't want to take the time. "You should put this on the computer." I didn't want to put it on the computer. There's something about the computer and existentialism that just doesn't match. And it was healthy for students to get up and walk to the Library and read the paper in the Library. And then also once the paper was finished and that week's work was done, then I'd take those papers and they were gone. Nobody else was going to access them anymore. Computer, they get out there, and it's difficult to control. And I've never had the skills to make it work. Somebody maybe could make it work. But I ran into this recently from a...he was never in my class, but he married one of our really good Religious Studies majors. A woman by the name of...**Janice Capel [sp?]**. And she married Mark Anderson. I in fact performed the wedding ceremony for them. So I did do that. I would marry students. I mean I would perform the ceremony for students. And I did that, oh maybe fifteen, twenty, twenty-five times, I've done that **pastoral [?]** thing. But Mark Anderson went to, Jan went to the University of Chicago in the New Testament field and got her Ph.D. in New Testament. And Mark Anderson went to the Law School at the University of Chicago. And they both came up here, lived here after they were married. Lived here for four or five years and then she taught down at St. Olaf College and he was in a big law firm in St. Paul. But then he got an offer to become a Professor of Law at the University of Idaho. And so she moved out there with him and got a job teaching in the Philosophy Department at the University of Idaho. But I just saw him this last week. And he was picking up his son, who is a junior here at

Mac—Eric Anderson. And their older son, the oldest son went to Carleton—they couldn't get him here. He wanted to go to Carleton, so that's where he ended up. But he was a computer fellow and Eric is a musician and also a creative writing—more of a Macalester kind of person [laughter]. So, but he was telling me that the computer has changed his classroom. That all he sees now in front of him are laptop computers [unclear]. And he doesn't know whether they're sending messages to one another or what is really going on their mind. And I didn't expect that kind of critique from Mark, because he's pretty *savoir faire* but abreast of all that. I'm just, I use the computer as a typewriter and then I search for library sources, but I don't...I'm not skilled in all the techniques that would be available if I had grown up with it, you know, that sort of thing. But the computer has had some impact and I think it would affect what goes on in some classrooms. And these classrooms at Luther Seminary I understand, that same thing was going on. A bunch of computer screens there, and people would take all their notes on the computer. And eye contact isn't quite there anymore. You don't know whether they're with you or not anymore.

[1:00:07]

LZ: So we had just been talking about technology, and I guess I was curious if you really felt, in kind of your last years at Macalester, if you felt that creeping into your own classroom in any way?

DH: You know, I did tell you that the third book that I wrote had to do with technology, *Technology, Theology, and the Idea of Progress*. And that involved an experience I had with Chuck Green of the Political Science Department, who was one of those people hired in the mid-

'60s, who contributed so much to the development of Macalester in those years. We went down to the University of Chicago to a seminar on technology. It was a weekend seminar, there must have been six or seven presentations on the role of technology in Western culture. As a result of that seminar I ended up teaching a course in Technology and Ethics because many of the tough questions that we ask today in ethics come as a result of technological developments. I did try to address some of the issues in that course, which came as a result of attending the University of Chicago seminar. The technology question that we dealt with was in part the long term impact of the assimilation of technology within the Western cultural tradition. What I was arguing in my ethics course is the supposition that you cannot deal with the ethics of technology if you don't know the history of technology, and how it developed and how it has taken on an increasingly dominant role in the cultural tradition. This poses some interesting theoretical issues, because technology gets wedded to the idea of progress in the West, and not every cultural tradition has shared the idea of progress. That is, for many cultural traditions, it's the order of nature, a cyclical pattern, rather than a linear pattern of development that dominates. What once was repeats itself as in the cycle of life and death. So religion can also fit into that pattern, one way or another. The question to be asked is where does the linear development come from. Technology certainly plays a critical role in that. You think of warfare, you think of the atomic bomb. I had enlisted in the Navy in World War II when the bomb ended my military career because I had enlisted just for the emergency. When the bomb was dropped, the war ended virtually immediately. This is the kind of question you get into—the issues of how technology impacts life. This was the kind of broad question I was most concerned with.

[1:04:04]



When Macalester dropped the old credit system and went to the course system in '63/'64, a new course designed for the incoming freshman class was called "Man and his World". It should have been "Humankind and its World" or whatever. But it was called "Man and his World". The first year that that course was taught, the freshman class regarded it as its favorite course. It was a course in which the teaching faculty from different department would come in and teach components of the course. It was designed to explore a certain period of Western history, with politics, religion, art, literature, and science offered for discussion. The faculty, ten to fifteen in number, were called upon to read assigned texts with a broad expanse of subject matter, and discuss on a shared level with the students. Generally they would come fresh to the reading just as the students did. There would also be a shared general lecture on one aspect of the historical period given by a faculty member with some expertise in the subject. In the second year that the course was taught, a steering committee changed all of the readings in the course with a negative impact on the teaching faculty. The faculty didn't want to continue to have to read new material every year. That was a strategic error, since faculty couldn't build on what the faculty had familiarized themselves with the first time. So in the course of two or three years the course lost faculty support and was dropped. Macalester, in connection with that course, had television screens in each of the rooms where sections of the course were taught. As a result the lectures weren't held in a big classroom auditorium; they were delivered in a tv studio and piped into smaller classrooms. This was a technological wonder at the time. It was felt to be the wave of the future on the part of some. Well in a space of four or five years enthusiasm for this dissipated, too. There was no call to continue wide use of lecturing in this form. Not every technology that is attempted survives, also in the educational realm. Piped-in learning and instruction was not successful as a pattern of general instruction within the College. But of

course, since then, the computer has changed most of our ways of doing things and proven very advantageous for a lot of people in the instructional field.

[1:07:52]

LZ: Switching gears a little bit, in researching, I went through *Mac Weeklys*, I had found that you had served, you were the faculty representative when Macalester joined the other colleges. And I guess, no one has really talked about that and I'm curious to kind of see how—

DH: I saw that you put that in the questions you proposed to your interviewees. I should prepare myself. I frankly don't recall my being a major player, or minor one even, in the setting up of the ACTC program. If I played a role in that one, it was probably a functional one. I think I must have been appointed by the Dean to sit in on it. The curriculum was worked out by other people and the faculty representatives probably okayed the proposals. It had a Director who had oversight of the design and operation. My experience of the ACTC program came chiefly with my Existentialism course. Students at St. Thomas and St. Catherine's would want to come to Macalester to take the course for a religion credit in their own schools. I had to restrict their participation because I offered enrollment first to our own Macalester students. ACTC students weren't allowed to bump Macalester students who wanted into the course. Yet I did get some St. Thomas and some St. Kate's students in that course. The course followed a seminar pattern and met only one night a week. So there were reasons sometimes, beyond intellectual curiosity, why ACTC students may have wanted to take that course. Overall I felt that program was very positive and good, and it continues to this day. But as far as the initiation and design of the program I do not recall playing any major role. As an added word our Macalester Religious

Studies Department for some years held joint meetings with the Religious Studies Departments of the participating schools. It was interesting and helpful to get to know the faculty in the other schools. And we did then swap courses once in a while with our colleagues in the other schools. For example I taught a course once on Protestantism at St. Thomas. That came about also however as a result of Vatican II (1963-1965), which represented a critical turning point in Catholic spiritual and religious life, allowing doors to be opened wider for Catholic people to interact across denominational boundaries more freely. The ACTC program coincided with larger movements elsewhere, economic needs as well, that led to important cooperative efforts.

[1:11:25]

LZ: Well moving on, the next set of questions are kind of reflecting over the changes that you saw here. And so the first one just has to do with, did you see, from when you started in 1959 to when you retired, changes within the student body and types of things that they were engaged in or interested in.

DH: Certainly this was the case. I guess we have touched on some of those matters already. We moved from being an upper Midwest college to a much more cosmopolitan institution and student body. We made significant strides in stimulating a higher quality of intellectual curiosity and preparedness in students as Mac itself improved. That was a very stimulating thing. We've had a number of faculty people come in and teach as a sabbatical replacement for a year or so at Macalester, respected faculty people from other schools, and it was common to hear them say, "Oh, your students are so bright, they're so eager, they're so interesting." That's something of great value to Macalester. Even though I miss some of the family spirit, the potlucks and other

things of the earlier Macalester. The critical mind has got to be the goal of a liberal arts education—you have to be able to think things anew. I've taken a great interest in Francis Bacon of late, because he was a very pivotal person in the rise of both critical thinking and the belief in progress in the Western world. Macalester and its students are part of that tradition, and I see that continuing even in the face of, or along with, current accents upon multiculturalism. And he was very critical of inherited learning. And Bacon, one of his lead propositions—he was interested also in technology. He was one of the first people to be cognizant of the impact of technology on Western thought. He had three great technological innovations that he said that radically transform the world and people's thought about the world. One was the magnet—the compass. The other is the printing press. And the third one—I always have trouble coming up with the third one—he omitted the clock. The weight-driven clock. The Middle Ages, 1285 or so in there, the weight-driven clock changed the way people thought about time. And what was his third one? The magnet, the printing press. It might have been gun powder. And so he began to—he argued on the basis of this, but also for other philosophical, theological reasons—that truth is thought[?] of time. Meaning that against the Greek tradition of truth as change, the Greeks resisted change. That which is most real isn't subject to change. And the search for essences of timeless truth. Then you get this historical revisionism in the late Middle Ages, really in the early modern age. With people like—well the scientific revolution comes at that same time. But interestingly enough, Bacon was not wedded to the Copernican worldview. He was still uncertain or still a little drawn to the Ptolemaic worldview, where everything revolves around the Earth, rather than the Earth revolving around... But those are tremendous dislocations of how we think about ourselves in the world. He didn't push this point that we're constantly confronted with the issue of inherited knowledge, which is rooted in the marketplace.

Which is rooted in our individual experience. And is rooted in our tribal traditions. And so Bacon is a key figure in how the format of inquiry and critical thinking gets introduced in a major new way in the Western world and is part of what the liberal arts in fact is. It's to be able to be critical of those inherited patterns of thinking, which so dispose our minds that we can't see anything but what we have grown up with, as the order of our mental life. [unclear]. But that's where critical thinking—and that's what I think we have going for us in our student body. [unclear].

[1:17:26]

LZ: When you retired, where did you see the role of religion among students, and faculty...

DH: I'm a little disappointed at Macalester's own drift towards secularism, even though it was largely inevitable. The religious field is a strange field in regard. There's a lot of interest in spirituality; and postmodernism often leads to attempts to resurrect cultural traditions with an accent on diversity. But some of that I feel can dilute critical thinking. Religious traditions, perhaps most often, feel uncomfortable and threatened by critical thought. But critical thought, I believe, has to be part of the religious tradition.

[1:18:19]

LZ: What were some of the major, were there major policy changes that you witnessed at Macalester that really had an impact on the college?

DH: The new curriculum introduced in '63/'64 was major: the substitution of courses for graduation in place of the quota of 128 credits. The dropping of most requirements in the early '70s. This also was a major shift. Internationalism has been a longtime emphasis at Macalester. It has long provided for overseas experience and learning for students. This was so of the school when I first started teaching in 1959, though then mostly as summer experiences. Macalester at the time had programs that provided summer work and learning experiences. For a while, DeWitt Wallace arranged in the mid-'60s for the Hilton Hotel system to hire Mac students for summer jobs in London or Paris or other places. But internationalism has been part of the Macalester tradition years before I came to the school. Other policies? Changes has been ongoing in terms of the curriculum.

[1:20:01]

LZ: Vietnam was such a huge issue in the late '60s and '70s and I'm curious as...in the '80s and the '90s, was there, what types of things did students focus their energy on, in those eras?

DH: For one thing in the '80s there was major student interest in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, along with the effort to move investments out of South Africa in protest against the South African apartheid policy. This had an impact on heightening scrutiny of the college's investment portfolio.

[1:20:45]

LZ: Did you feel like there was a decrease in the amount of activism that was taking place on campus?

DH: I think this was so after Vietnam. In '74, '75, I think everybody was exhausted for a while. It was so tense that it was a relief to be quiet for a while. But there have always been active student groups that are part of Macalester's college scene. I don't know that there has been a claim of broader representation of conservative points of view on campus, but I expect that this has been the case. I don't know for sure how that works out. Mac it seems has always been on the liberal side of most questions.

[1:21:42]

LZ: What is your relationship with Macalester today as a...

DH: [unclear]. I don't think the college works very hard on maintaining ties with its previous faculty. The make-up of the faculty is continually changing and is its chief concern. Some of the retired faculty people maintain office space after retirement. I haven't done so. I always worked out of my home anyway. I never used my college office to study or write or do things like that. I do keep track of special lectures at the college.

[1:22:35]

LZ: Have you been, what types of other things have you been doing in your...

DH: I've been teaching for seven years, since my retirement, in the Osher Life-long Learning Institute. It used to be called the Elder Learning Institute, run out of the University of Minnesota. It continues to have its offices there, though it is independently funded. They have

recently received a one million dollar endowment from the Osher Foundation that has enabled it to carry on an extensive elder hostel program, for people living in the area. The instructors are people drawn from retired faculty or others who have developed a special expertise in some area. The institute offers eight-week courses over two, three quarters. I've taught in that program for seven years, offering a variety of courses. I find it very interesting to teach and exchange views with different age groups and with people who have lived through similar experiences. A different kind of dialog takes place. Most recently I've become interested in the figure of Abraham Lincoln, especially his speeches. I taught a course last Spring on the speeches of Abraham Lincoln. At the end of the semester, the class went down to Lincoln Library in Springfield, Illinois. We visited the major Lincoln sites there, with its new library and museum. Most of the courses I have taught through the Learning Institute cover areas of my expertise and draw upon courses I taught at Macalester. I enjoy doing that, as I also continue my own writing projects.

[1:25:17]

LZ: Do you have a favorite memory or a favorite time when you look back at Macalester in the years you were here?

DH: Well, I told you about the faculty pool room. That was a very warm, and kind of endearing experience, and I really developed my pool game there quite a bit. There were some smart-alec college kids that I beat once in a while when they challenged me. But we had our own game called Macalester Cowboy Pool. It's a combination of billiards and pocket pool. There are only three object balls on the table and a cue ball. And you could score points by either hitting two



different objects balls with your cue ball, or by sinking a one, two, or three ball in a pocket, for which you got one, two, or three points for it. But you could only score fifty points. If you went over that and accidentally hit a two ball into the pocket when you were at forty-nine points then you went back to zero. This was a unique game at Macalester. And we became quite proficient as a faculty—of those that played pool—at that game. It was a mark of who we were and set its stamp upon all of us. So...those are fond memories. I remember when I was first introduced into the game, I was just a spectator. Because I hadn't played a lot of pool. And so I watched them play. They would play two against two, in this game. Then one day they were one person short, so they turned to me and asked me if I'd like to play. It was nice of them to invite me in. And I said, "Yeah, I haven't played, I fooled around with it just as a kid for a little bit." I was assigned to play with Murray Braden, of the Math Department. When they invited me in and assigned me to Murray, he let off this big sigh, that meant that he expected to be a loser with me. You know it's kind of like being the last person chosen on a softball team or whatever. And you're put out in right field. Well that's what happened. And it hurt me a little, to have him sigh like that, when he was assigned me. So since I was unmarried at the time and used to take a lot of my meals in the basement, in the cafeteria, at night I got the janitor to let me into the pool room at night after supper. And I practiced and I practiced and I practiced. So that I began to rise in the ladder, you know, self-improvement, that kind of thing. After a while, I was the one that signed when Murray played with me. So, it was fun. It was a lot of fun. And then, at some of the student festivals and fundraisers that we would have, the students would challenge the faculty at pool. We were able to hold our own against the students. That was a fond memory. Then, as a person always interested in sports, I really enjoyed my first two or three years at Macalester going to football games at night. We didn't have night football in the East where I

grew up. Mac had good football games those first three or four years. I enjoyed that. Then I witnessed our long losing streak. What, fifty-three games in a row that we lost? That was a sad memory. Yet that too was a fond memory. Naturally I have friendships with a number of faculty, people who have continued as friends over the years.

LZ: Well those are all of my questions. Is there anything that you want to add that—

DH: No—

LZ: —that you haven't covered?

DH: I think we covered as much as I can recall from my fading memory.

LZ: Well thank you so much.

DH: Ok, well thank you. It's good to get a record of these kinds of reflections and things. So, it's a worthy project.

[End of Disc 1:30:12]