

Inventory of Theodore A. Gill Papers

Biography

From obituary posted by San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2005.

The Rev. Dr. Theodore Alexander Gill, a former president of San Francisco Theological Seminary and later provost of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in the City University of New York (CUNY), died at the age of 85 on Friday, June 10, 2005, following a lengthy illness, in Princeton, New Jersey.

Born in Eveleth, Minnesota on January 7, 1920, Ted Gill was educated at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Princeton Theological Seminary, Union Seminary in New York City, and the University of Zurich where he wrote his doctoral dissertation on “Recent Protestant Political Theory.” His teachers included Emil Brunner, Karl Barth, Josef Hromadka, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich. He was awarded six honorary doctorates during his career. In his time at the San Francisco seminary, he became one of the founders of the Graduate Theological Union based in Berkeley.

After serving Presbyterian parishes in New Rochelle, New York and West End Presbyterian church in New York City, he became professor of religion and dean of the chapel at Lindenwood College in St. Charles, Missouri, and subsequently managing editor of The Christian Century magazine in Chicago and editor of its sister publication The Pulpit. He was president of San Francisco Theological Seminary from 1958 to 1966, leaving that position to occupy the higher education desk of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland. Following a return to the parish in Detroit, he joined the faculty of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a CUNY college in midtown Manhattan, where he remained from 1971 through 1989. In retirement, he served as theologian in residence at Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey.

Ted Gill’s passion was for the link between religion and the arts, and over the years he served as a part-time leader of such organizations as Art, Religion, and Contemporary Culture – founded by Paul Tillich – and American Summer Institutes, a series of annual seminars on theology and the arts in locations that included Rome, Berlin, Budapest, and St. Andrews. As president of the San Francisco seminary, he organized a ground-breaking program on theology and theatrical arts. He also served on Presbyterian judicial commissions in the northeast and on national church committees that produced The Worshipbook of 1970 and commissioned the seal or logo of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1985. At the time of his death, he was a retired member of the Presbytery of New York City.

From the early days of the US civil rights struggle, Ted Gill publicly supported equal rights for all and openly opposed segregationist practices in both southern and northern states. In 1963-64, he was regional chair of California's "No on Proposition 13" campaign against discriminatory housing legislation, and in 1965 he marched with Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in support of voting rights. As he and dozens of students and faculty members from San Francisco Theological Seminary participated in the Selma to Montgomery civil rights march of 1965, promises of millions of dollars in endowments to the institution he led were withdrawn in protest by potential donors. Late in his life, Ted Gill remarked that "the high point of my career in the ministry was the week that I cost my seminary five million dollars." In later years, he voiced support for the full participation of gays and lesbians in church and society.

He was the author or editor of numerous books, journals, and articles. Among his books were The Sermons of John Donne (1958), Memo for a Movie: A Short Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1971), and, with Robert Bellah and Krister Stendahl, Religion and the Academic Scene (1975).

He was noted for editorial columns and sermons that were featured in church magazines and on radio's "The Protestant Hour." Preaching in a sermon series titled "Christian Clichés," Ted Gill told his listeners:

"I have known and loved too many of the victims of the old-fashioned version of the 'Christian' life: wonderful, juicy human beings who were persuaded by a misguided church that they had to veil their vividness, bank their fires, dehydrate their interest, denature their enthusiasms, if they wanted to be Christian. No, the old idea will not do... The Christian life is not the life that is made to fit the legalistic box, that is forced to fit into the pattern. The Christian life is life lived in a certain direction – in, through, around, above whatever temperamental, physical, psychological obstacles any of us may have. But always in that direction – the direction which is assigned to us by what we know of God, by what we know in Jesus Christ of the character and nature of the realest real, by what we know in Jesus of God and the love of God. The Christian life is life lived in appropriate reaction to God's action for us. The Christian life will be described in terms of the direction we are headed, and of how well we keep going in that direction, no matter how often we trip and fall."

At the 1968 assembly of the World Council of Churches, Ted Gill gave a speech on "The Great Convergence" of education and the churches. Reflecting on student demonstrations in universities that spring, he revealed his discomfort with patterns of conformity in higher education:

“On the campuses, a generation erupted, an important piece of society let fly. The protest might have begun on the field of general education, but it was a wild shout, a rough rejection of education-in-general, of everything taken for granted by all the elements now molding people, coercing society, determining the future. The real adversary was not this or that administrator or this or that teacher or this or that course. The real adversaries were that rigid vice-chancellor, the status quo; those sternly directive professors, government and industry; that intolerable bore, academic tradition; those long courses in accommodation... Some of the brightest and best of our youth flame now in revolutionary dissatisfaction with the goals they see accepted by those who teach them, affect them, direct them. They distrust the values commonly invoked. They defy the system which ever more efficiently instructs the new generation in means that they see leading straight to inhuman ends: unendurable inequities, intolerable narrowing of human possibilities, blasphemous vulgarizations of spirit.” (“The Great Convergence,” *The Ecumenical Review* 20.4 [Oct. 1968], 385-94.)

In the April 1958 issue of The Pulpit, editor Gill reflected on the intricacies of theology in light of his father’s recent death: “We squabble and we rant about all the picayune details we assign to mysteries completely beyond our assessing, when all we really have to tell the world, all we really have to live on is the good news that God is love... But now, the love of God that gets us through our hard days is for more than funerals. It is for living along. When you know in your bones that the most real knows you and loves you, that beyond the vicissitudes of experience and the catastrophes of existence the ground of all being has declared itself for you, there should be a relief and a release in your living, a new inventiveness and zest in your living, a new pleasure, a more confident participation in life and its precious fascinations.”

Due to a blockage of his carotid artery in May 1994, he lost the capacity for speech and began a gradual decline in health. His wife of 57 years, Katherine Yonker Gill, died in July 2002. He is survived by a daughter, Laurie Melissa Keeran of Brewster, Massachusetts; a son, the Rev. Theodore A. Gill, Jr. of Geneva, Switzerland; a granddaughter, Elizabeth Katherine Gill of Durham, North Carolina; and longtime caregiver Ben Mensah of New York City. A memorial service will be held at Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey and is being planned for Monday, June 20.

Contents

Box	Location	Contents	Date
1	3/C/7	8mm Roll, Cassettes, Reel to Reel tapes	1963-1994
2	3/C/7	"Day Files"	1959-1960
3	3/C/8	Sermons Numbered 47-76 (Manuscript and Mimeo)	1961-1962
4	3/C/8	Sermons Numbered 1-24 (Manuscript and Mimeo)	1960
5	3/C/9	European and Middle Eastern Tours (materials)	1973-1989
6	3/C/9	Sermons Numbered 25-46 (Manuscript and Mimeo)	1960-1962
7	3/D/1	Greeting Cards (non-family)	1958-1994
8	3/D/1	Addresses and phone numbers (empty envelopes)	1958-1994
9	3/D/2	Cassettes, VHS tapes, Reel to Reel	1965-1990
10	3/D/2	Princeton University and Seminary Papers	1958-1976
11	3/D/2	Princeton University and Seminary Papers	1958-1998
12	3/D/3	Correspondence related to Editorship of <u>Christian Century</u> and <u>The Pulpit</u>	1955-1959
13	3/D/3	Yale University Courses taught	1984-1986
14	3/D/3	Undated Handwritten notes for talks and sermons	Undated
15	3/D/4	Miscellaneous Papers from travel (receipts, correspondence, mementos)	1955-1969
16	3/D/4	Film and TV projects (not Bonhoeffer or SFTS related)	1959-1986
17	3/D/4	SFTS related correspondence/memos	1959-1965

18	3/D/4	Radio Addresses (Two bound volumes and Loose typed pages)	1960-1961
19	3/D/5	Nassau Presbyterian Church, Princeton, NJ (Newsletters and Correspondence)	1955-1994
20	3/D/5	Miscellaneous Papers	1970-1979
21	3/D/5	Papers and Correspondence to/from various Organizations	1954-1989
22	3/D/6	Correspondence	1941-1947
23	3/D/6	Papers and Correspondence to/from various Organizations	1955-1994
24	3/D/6	Family Correspondence	1958-1997
25	3/D/7	Miscellaneous Services, Sermons, and Prayers (handwritten and printed)	1975-1992
26	3/D/7	Book and Publication Notes	1962-1992
27	3/D/7	<u>New Delhi, New World, and New Church</u> and Doubleday Correspondence	1961
28	3/D/7	SFTS Speeches and Sermons at SFTS	1960-1961
29	3/D/8	Miscellaneous handwritten notes for sermons, speeches, and articles	undated
30	3/D/8	Clippings	1956-1996
31	3/D/8	Naussau Presbyterian, Princeton, NJ; Sermon Notes, newsletters, Music	1978-1997
32	3/D/9	Lectures while at SFTS (including Dictaphone tape ribbons), Chimes articles, Editorial and Article Manuscripts	1963-1998
33	3/D/9	General Correspondence, SFTS related	1959-1962
34	3/D/9	2 appointment calendars, drawings, handwritten notes, miscellaneous news letters	1958-1982

35	3/E/2	Undated notes, explicit pictures from Gay magazines, book about naturalism in Europe, "Yank" magazine	1976-1985
36	3/E/2	Miscellaneous Personal Correspondence	1976-1998
37	3/E/2	Miscellaneous Correspondence	1971-1979
38	3/E/2	Miscellaneous Correspondence	1980-1989
39	3/E/3	Various drafts of book/play/movie on Bonhoeffer	1968-1983
40	3/E/3	Notes, Correspondence, materials for Bonhoeffer Movie (also <u>Memo for a Movie</u>) - some water damage	1959-1979
41	3/E/3	Boenhoeffer materials: photos, notes, articles, conference materials, news clippings, photocopied letter from Bonhoeffer w/correspondence from R. Niebuhr	1969-1995
42	3/E/4	Correspondence and materials from World Council of Churches	1960-1971
43	3/E/4	typed and handwritten notes, extracted book sections	undated
44	3/E/5	Medical and financial paperwork, Educational documents,	1940-1990
45	3/E/5	Miscellaneous and Family Correspondence	1940s-1960s
46	3/E/5	Schedules, Agendas, Diaries, Calendars, Art collection documentation, Book collection ledger	1959-1996
47	3/E/5	Biographical, Miscellaneous	1947-1994
48	3/E/5	Biographical, Miscellaneous, Memorial Services, SFTS Inauguration, Diaries	1948-1998
49	3/E/6	Correspondents A-M	1955-1994
50	3/E/6	Correspondents N-Z	1947-1997

51	3/E/7	SFTS Issues	1959-1962
52	3/E/7	Christian and Bible Cliché	1957-1994
53	3/E/7	SFTS Business Travels	1965-1966
54	3/E/8	Church correspondence and bulletins,	1958-1996
55	3/E/8	Speeches, Sermons, and Talks	1959-1986
56	3/E/9	SFTS Business Travels	1964 (Jan-Dec)
57	3/E/9	Notes, Speeches, Addresses, Sermons	1960-1990
58	3/F/1	Sermon and Article Notes, Photos, Miscellaneous	1965-1996
59	3/F/1	Calendars, radio sermons, SFTS business expenses	1950-1991
60	3/F/2	Publications, Newsletters, bulletins, misc correspondence	1962-1990
61	3/F/2	Notecards containing quotes and reading notes, news clippings	1946-1998
62	3/F/2	Theses and Papers	1942-1984
63	3/F/3	Speaking engagement papers	1958-1964
64	3/F/3	Miscellaneous Correspondence (birthday cards, receipts, travel programs for ASI - American Summer Institutes)	1983-1997
65	3/F/4	Presbyterian Organizations	1958-1993
66	3/F/4	Scrapbooks of articles written for Christian Century re: travels in Asia, misc personal correspondence	1950-1959
67	3/F/4	John Jay College speeches, courses, misc. (BOX 1)	1976-1989
68	3/F/4	John Jay College speeches, courses, misc. (BOX 2)	1983-1988
69	3/F/4	John Jay College speeches, courses, misc. (BOX 3)	1974-1988
70	3/F/4	John Jay College speeches, courses, clippings, misc. (BOX 4)	1976-1990

71	3/F/4	John Jay College speeches, courses, correspondence, clippings, misc. (BOX 5)	1975-1998
72	3/F/5	Speaking Requests and Appearances	1958-1968
73	3/F/5	Articles (by others) and Clippings, <u>Theology Today</u> editorial council	1959-1993
74	3/F/5	Copies of Books written, articles	1959-1964
75	3/F/5	Articles, Addresses, Interviews, Book Contracts, Publishers' Contracts	1954-1977
76	3/F/6	SFTS Trustee and Alumni files	1958-1988
77	3/F/6	Sermons and Speeches	1959-1966
78	3/F/7	Original drafts of Sermons and Speeches	1959-1964
79	3/F/7	Personal Files Jan. - June	1964
80	3/F/8	Miscellaneous files, minutes, reports, lectures, Addresses, correspondence	1958-1996
81	3 rd floor	Virgin birth, Tropic of Cancer, Cranks, China (Neil Hamilton)	
82	3 rd floor	Photos	
83	3 rd floor	Controversy	
84	3 rd floor	Inauguration and some correspondence.	

Note: Created from GRACE catalog record BX8915 .G544 and box list by Justin Lipscomb by David Stiver on 11/29/2016. Original catalog record created by Michael Peterson, longtime librarian at SFTS.