



connect

A Newsletter for High School Religion Teachers, Campus Ministers, and Principals
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featuring Using Literature in Theology Classes

Kathleen Hodapp



Editor's note: The author of our feature article, Kathleen Hodapp, was one of the participants in last summer's workshop "The Catholic High School As Faith Community," held here in Winona, Minnesota, as well as on the East Coast and the West Coast. Kathleen came prepared with materials to share about some of her teaching methods in theology or religion classes. This article, along with the "from the classroom" piece on page 6, is adapted from the information sheets she shared.

Along with a full schedule of theology classes, I have the privilege of teaching advanced English to ninth graders. It became apparent to me as I taught the course that good literature can have great applicability to subjects in theology. Since

then, I have found that using literature in my theology classes makes for challenging and interesting courses. The following are some uses I have made of good literature.

Getting Started with an Anthology

For a couple of years I used the text *Stories of God: An Anthology of Literature for Catholic Schools* (edited by Michel Bettigole, OSF, et al., published by Brown-ROA). It's a collection of classic and contemporary short stories, dramas, biographies, narratives, and poetry that seeks to make readers aware of their Catholic literary heritage. It is a good place to start if you have never before tried to use literature in your classroom. The themes of the book's units are presence, sin, grace, witnesses, and the God of all peoples. These fine literary pieces can shed light on any number of theology course topics.

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Summer
Workshops,
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in touch

Dear Readers,

We're hearing more and more these days about multiple intelligences theory and accelerated learning—tapping into the varied learning styles of students. In fact, most of the staff at Saint Mary's Press recently took part in a two-day workshop on accelerated learning and found it has broad application to everyday life. Another term for it is *active learning*—the use of engaging methods that put the student at the center of the learning process. We have tried to incorporate such methods into our materials, but will be focusing even more on them in future developments. Kathleen Hodapp's feature article and "from the classroom" piece help us all along in that direction.

Please note that more of our summer workshops are planned

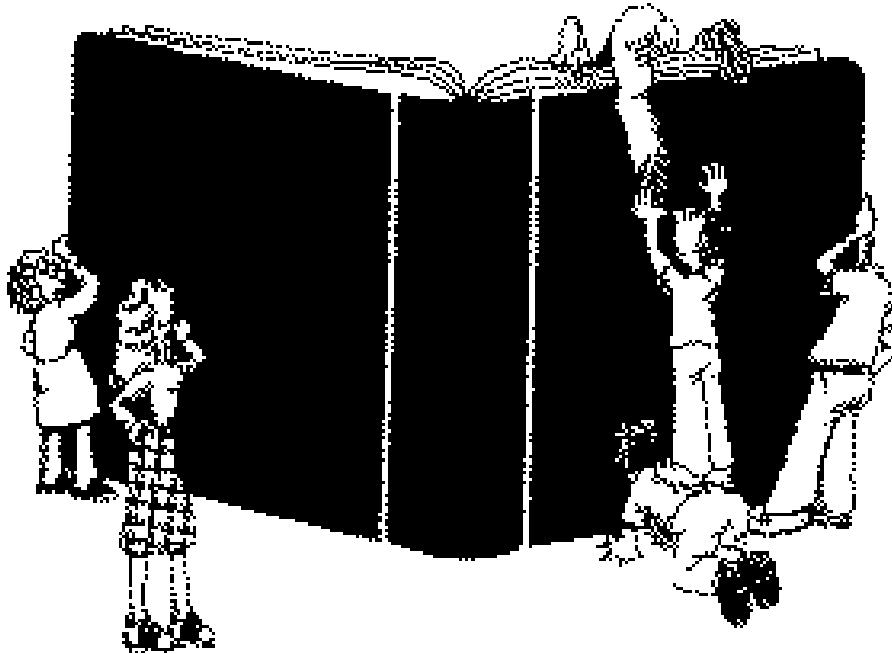
(see *in touch*, page 2)

Using Literature in Theology Classes

(continued from page 1)

The Joshua Novels

The *Joshua* novels, by Joseph F. Girzone, are easy reads, and most students find them thought provoking. I have used the original *Joshua* (Macmillan, 1987) in a church history course and in a Scriptures course. It is most advantageous to have students read the novel at the point in the church history course when we are studying the Middle Ages. Students are fascinated by the connections between Saint Francis of Assisi and the novel's main character, Joshua, and his beliefs about the institutional church. For a Scriptures or Christology course, the obvious parallels between Jesus and Joshua allow a fresh reading of the Gospels in light of the novel.



I have used *Joshua and the Children: A Parable* (Macmillan, 1989) in both a morality and a spirituality course. The book does not name a locale, but the setting has striking similarities to Northern Ireland. As a class, we discussed the concepts of hate being taught to the children in the novel, and the need for conversion.

The Drowning of Stephan Jones

In my morality course, I use the young-adult novel *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*, by Bette Greene (Bantam Books, 1991). In it a teenage girl has a crush on a boy who participates in harassing and killing a gay man in their small town. I focus class discussion on decision making and the sin of apathy in the characters. It is a fascinating novel, a motivating impetus for discussion. You should be forewarned that it has some crude language, and some passages are difficult to read because of the cruelty of those who are taking the Bible literally and going too far. I have had parents read it with their sons or daughters and have found much success with it.

Nolan, *If I Should Die Before I Wake* (Harcourt Brace, 1996). Set in contemporary time, it is about a girl who is part of a neo-Nazi organization. After an accident, while in a coma in the hospital, she somehow lives the life of a young Jewish girl in Poland during the Holocaust. The novel blends scriptural passages (particularly from Jeremiah) with a beautiful call to conversion and witness. I have had nothing but rave reviews for this novel from students.

Other Literature on the Holocaust

I teach the Holocaust as part of my morality course. Class discussion concentrates on the moral dimension more than on the historical aspects, as we focus on who should be held responsible, apathy, a consistent life ethic, and so on. For this purpose I use the classic *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, which gives the account of his own experiences as a Jew during the Holocaust. We also discuss the questioning of faith in the book.

(see *Using Literature in Theology Classes*, page 3)

in touch (continued from page 1)

for 1999 (see page 4). We are on a roll with this faith community movement, with the help of some marvelous leaders who are out there in the schools doing what you are trying to do every day.

Enjoy the winter. Up here in Minnesota, we *have* to enjoy it!

Warmly,

Barbara

Barbara Allaire
Editor for High School
Curriculum Materials



If I Should Die Before I Wake

Conversion is a unit theme in my spirituality course. I have used the novel *The Chosen*, by Chaim Potok (Simon and Schuster, 1967), and it has worked reasonably well. For the all-girls school context in which I teach, however, I prefer a high-interest young-adult novel by Han

Using Literature in Theology Classes

(continued from page 2)

*Editor's note: Another teacher, Pam Reidy, of Notre Dame Academy in Worcester, Massachusetts, also uses literature about the Holocaust in her morality course. To explore the dimensions of moral character, habits, virtues, and vices, she has her students read *Stones from the River*, by Ursula Hegi (Simon and Schuster, 1997), a mature novel set in Germany during the two world wars. As Pam says, the protagonist, Trudi Montag, is a great choice as a character study because she is a dwarf and her sense of being different is something to which teens immediately relate. She also acts as a symbol for Germany in its struggle and response to evil.*

*In addition, Pam uses Schindler's List (either the book, by Thomas Keneally, Simon and Schuster, 1982, or the movie, available at video stores) to teach about the nature of sinful social structures. Other books on the Holocaust that Pam suggests for teaching morality are *The Sunflower*, by Simon Wiesenthal (Schocken Books, 1976) and *Cries in the Night: Women Who Challenged the Holocaust*, by Michael Phayer (Sheed and Ward, 1997).*

Toning the Sweep

I have taught a unit with the sophomore English teacher, which centered on the paschal mystery and the circle of life. The young-adult novel *Toning the Sweep*, by Angela Johnson, is a beautiful story that illustrates the theme well. In it, an African American teenage girl and her mother help her grandmother move to their home during the older woman's terminal illness. Along the way the girl learns about grieving and mourning, healing and hoping, and letting go. The novel ties in well with the passages about Jesus and the Apostles at the end of the Gospels, when he is soon to leave them. In that unit, we also use the movies *Terms of Endearment* and *Evening Star*.

Poetry, Essays, and Sermons

Poetry and essays by many of the world's great authors abound in potential applications to theology. There are great possibilities in Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Greenleaf Whittier, Francis Thompson, Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, John Donne, Denise Levertov, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and others. Encourage your students to make connections between the works of these writers and what they are studying in theology class.

In the Images of God unit of my spirituality course, I have students rewrite Jonathan Edwards's sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" to correspond with their own images of God. Beautiful essays come from the students: "Sinners in the Hands of a Loving God," "a Forgiving God," "a Just God," "a Wonderful God."

Magazines

I often use articles about contemporary issues in Christianity from popular magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *Life* to start discussions. I have incorporated many of these articles into my units in various classes, for instance, on prayer, Mary, the Resurrection of Jesus, the birth of Jesus, and the Bible. These articles can be challenging for students, but they also give them the opportunity to see other views and learn of the Catholic church's position on a given issue, which is explained—often quite accurately—by the journalists.

Kathleen Hodapp is the chair of the religion department at Mercy Academy in Louisville, Kentucky, where she teaches morality, the Scriptures, spirituality, and advanced English.



A Prayer in Times of Discouragement

This prayer is attributed to Saint Augustine of Hippo, one of the church's greatest theologians:

God of our life, there are days when the burdens we carry
chafe our shoulders and weigh us down;
when the road seems dreary and endless,
the skies gray and threatening;
when our lives have no music in them,
and our hearts are lonely,
and our souls have lost their courage.
Flood the path with light, we beseech Thee;
turn our eyes to where the skies are full of promise;
tune our hearts to brave music;
give us the sense of comradeship with heroes and saints
of every age;
and so quicken our spirits that we may be able to encourage
the souls of all who journey with us on the road to life,
to Thy honor and glory. Amen.

resource reviews

Because We Are Disciples (United States Catholic Conference (USCC) Publishing Services, 1993): 12 minutes; video purchase with discussion guide, \$17.95; publication number 559-3.

Developed as a companion to the U.S. bishops' pastoral plan for evangelization, this video presents people who are living the principal concepts of the plan, which are embedded in the Gospels. A cross section of the U.S. Catholic church gives a sense of the unity among various communities of the faithful. The plan is a living creed.

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, by the U.S. Catholic bishops (USCC, 1998) is excerpted in the quote from the recent document on page 5 of this issue. To obtain a copy of the full bishops' statement, published with the *Summary Report of the Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education*, ask USCC Publishing Services for publication number 5-281. The price is \$2.95.

To order the above materials from the USCC, write to Publishing Services, United States Catholic Conference, 3211 Fourth Street NE, Washington, DC 20017-1194; phone 800-235-8722; fax 202-722-8709.

Questions of Faith for Youth (UMCom Productions, 1992, 1993): a series of twelve videos, 16–20 minutes each; rent for \$18.00 each; purchase for \$29.95 each, or \$19.95 each if six or more are purchased.

These twelve videos, produced by the United Methodist church, feature thoughtful, articulate young people talking about a variety of beliefs and values. Their remarks are bound to stimulate good discussion in morality, faith, prayer, or lifestyles classes. Titles are the following: *What's God Like? How Do*

You Deal with Drugs? What Is Sin? What's a Friend? What About Sex? What Can the Church Do About the Future? Why Pray? Who Do You Want to Become? How Much Stuff Do You Need? How Do You Know What Is Right? What Can You Do About Violence? and Is Loving Yourself Easy? Not all titles were reviewed, but of those reviewed, two were especially good—*What's God Like?* and *What's a Friend?*

Rent or purchase videos from EcuFilm, 810 Twelfth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37203; phone 800-251-4091; fax 615-742-5125.

Voyage Through the Bible: Old Testament and Voyage Through the Bible: New Testament (Jones Digital Century, 1995): CD-ROM for both IBM-compatible and Macintosh computers, \$39.95 sold separately; \$69.95 sold as a set.

Actor Charlton Heston is the host for this remarkable, interactive, multimedia journey featuring key stories from the Old and New Testaments. The CD combines video of historical biblical sites, three-dimensional animation, interactive maps and timelines, and more.

Purchase from JEC Knowledge Store, web site www.knowledgestore.com; phone 888-4-K-STORE.

Journey to the Center of Love (Gateway Films, 1996): two videos, 72 minutes each; purchase set of two videos with discussion guide, \$24.99 plus \$3.95 shipping.

Sometimes people's dreams are shattered. . . . Others find their wildest hopes fulfilled. What does it all mean? Is there a God there, somewhere? If so, does God care about us? Can we know God? How?

(see resource reviews, page 5)

Summer Workshops: Plan Now!

This summer we'll again be offering workshops in three regions for high school teachers, campus ministers, and principals. Each region's workshop will have a different leadership team, coordinated by Shirley Kelter. These workshops are opportunities to learn from and share with others who are trying to let the spirit of Jesus renew Catholic schools as faith communities.

"The Catholic High School As Faith Community" workshop will be held in East and West Coast locations this year:

- 28 June to 1 July 1999, Serra Retreat, Malibu, California; cost \$400.
- 1 to 4 August 1999, Our Lady of Peace Spiritual Life Center, Narragansett, Rhode Island; cost \$375.

"Nurturing Spirituality with Faculty and Staff" is a new workshop being offered on the campus where Saint Mary's Press is located:

- 9 to 12 July 1999, Saint Mary's University in Winona, Minnesota; cost \$325.

All fees include room, board, and the workshop. Scholarships are available based on need. Watch for details in a brochure to be mailed this spring to everyone who receives *Connect*. For more information, contact Shirley Kelter at 800-533-8095, or e-mail her at skelter@smp.org.

reviews (continued from page 4)

These are the foundational questions explored through the lives of two young adults, a man and a woman at a university, in this six-part drama intended for group discussion and study. Issues that are dealt with include the influence of family; diverse cultures and religious beliefs; unwanted pregnancy; development of relationships; suffering; work that is meaningful and ethical; and the journey of faith.

The program is ideal for an upper-level course on issues of faith or for a Christian lifestyles course. The story line, the characters, the reality of the issues, and the images of God presented are sure to generate reflection and interesting classroom dialog, and the discussion guide is excellent. Parts of the program can be shown independently if the teacher does not have time to show it in its entirety. The program is a winner of the European Grand Prix Award.

Purchase from Vision Video, 2030 Wentz Church Road, P.O. Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490; phone 610-584-1893.

Arms for the Poor (Maryknoll World Productions): 25-minute video with study guide; purchase price, \$19.95 plus \$3.50 shipping.

This latest video from Maryknoll, which examines the U.S. arms trade, is an excellent resource for justice courses. Revealing the murky world of the weapons-export business, the video describes the impact of increasing arms sales to poor nations. It goes beyond politics and economics to ask if the arms business is not killing our national soul.

Purchase from Maryknoll World Productions, P.O. Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0308; phone 800-227-8523; fax 914-945-0670.

Reviews by Shirley Kelter



Sharing Catholic Social Teaching

The U.S. Catholic bishops published a statement in June 1998 entitled *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*. Here are a few excerpts:

Because this commitment to social justice is at the heart of who we are and what we believe, it must be shared more effectively. We offer these reflections to address the pressing need to educate all Catholics on the Church's social teaching and to share the social demands of the Gospel and Catholic tradition more clearly. If Catholic education and formation fail to communicate our social tradition, they are not fully Catholic. . . .

This is a call to action, an appeal especially to pastors, educators, and catechists to teach the Catholic social tradition in its fullness. . . .

We recognize the commitment and creativity of so many educators and catechists who already share our social tradition in their classrooms and programs.

However, despite these significant and ongoing efforts, our social heritage is unknown by many Catholics. Sadly, our social doctrine is not shared or taught in a consistent and comprehensive way in too many of our schools, seminaries, religious education programs, colleges, and universities. We need to build on the good work already underway to ensure that every Catholic understands how the Gospel and church teaching call us to choose life, to serve the least among us, to hunger and thirst for justice, and to be peacemakers. The sharing of our social tradition is a defining measure of Catholic education and formation. (Pp. 2-3)

Do You Know Young People Doing Justice?

As we revise our textbook *Christian Justice: Sharing God's Goodness*, we're searching for young people who have taken the initiative to practice Christian justice. We know there are many involved in justice work at the prompting of an adult leader. However, our focus here is on young people who became aware of injustice (through direct observation, a newspaper article, a class project, etc.) and were moved to take action, either by themselves or by enlisting the help of peers and adults.

We're looking for high school- and college-age young people involved in a wide array of issues, including but not limited to peacemaking, care for the earth, gender or race equity, economic justice, human rights, hunger, and homelessness. Their stories will be used in the textbook to illustrate the potential of all people—and in particular the young—to practice justice.

If you know of young people who meet these criteria, please take a moment to tell us about them. Send a paragraph or two briefly outlining their story, plus contact information in case we decide to interview them, to Jerry Daoust, Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320. Or send e-mail to jdaoust@smp.org.

from the classroom

The Connections Binder: A Theology Project

Kathleen Hodapp

The Connections Binder encourages students to find meaningful connections between the content they are studying in class and something from the world outside the classroom that they find interesting or appealing. I assign this project at the beginning of my courses in both morality and spirituality, but you can use this project in any theology course. The project fosters writing skills as well as symbolic thinking, engaging more than just the verbal intelligence of students. I'm grateful for Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences research, which has inspired me to do this kind of project. See, for instance, Gardner's Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983) and Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice (1993), both published by Basic Books.

The following is the information I give to students on a handout at the beginning of the course.

Assignment: The Connections Binder

The creation of this binder will be an ongoing project throughout the semester. You will be focusing on one unit of the course at a time in building the binder. Please turn in your binder work for each unit *one day before* the test for that unit. The binder work you do for each unit is worth 100 points. Spend quality time on this project; ideally, work on it throughout the study of each unit.

Materials Required

- a three-ring binder, 1-inch thick
- eight full-page tab dividers
- transparent contact paper
- markers
- construction paper
- an artistic work
- a pencil pouch

What Needs to Be Included?

For each unit, create the following:

1. A decorated tab divider. Decorate a full-page tab divider in an artistic, symbolic way to represent what we studied in that unit. The only words on this divider should be the title of the unit. Be as colorful and creative as you can, using collage, markers, construction paper, and so on. When you are finished decorating the divider, cover it with transparent contact paper.

2. A concept or topic and a related artistic work. Choose one of the concepts or topics from the unit. Then, from sources outside the course, find an artistic work that you think relates to the unit's concept and that will fit in the binder. It could be an article or an essay, a musical work (sung or instrumental), a poem, or a piece of visual art. If you choose a song or a poem, type the words on one sheet of paper for inclusion in the binder. For a musical piece (sung or instrumental), furnish an audiocassette of the music. For a previously published article or essay or for a painting or other art object, provide a photocopy.

Put the selected artistic work in your binder, and write a reflection piece on the connections between it and the concept or topic you chose from the unit. Type your reflection using the following format:

- a. At the top of the paper, name the concept you selected from the unit.
- b. Define the concept and explain in your own words what it means.
- c. Tell how the artistic work you chose connects with, demonstrates, illustrates, or sheds light on the concept from the unit.
- d. Give a personal reaction, telling how the concept and artistic work relate to your life and any comments you have about it.

Put the above reflection in your binder along with the artistic work.

3. A reflection on the whole unit. Reflect on the whole unit we have studied, responding to the following questions thoughtfully and honestly. Type your reflections and place them in your binder.

- a. What is the most important thing you have learned in this unit? What will you remember for a long time? Explain fully and give specifics.
- b. Name one concept or discussion that we had in this unit that you found particularly interesting or challenging. Why?
- c. Compose a prayer that seems to fit with this unit.

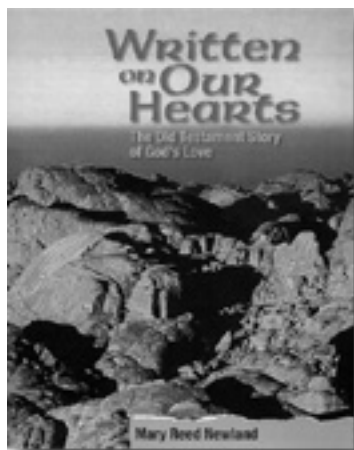
Kathleen Hodapp is also the author of our feature article in this issue. See page 3 for her byline.

from the press



Prayers Before an Awesome God: The Psalms for Teenagers, by David Haas, brings the Psalms to life for teens. In this paraphrasing of the Psalms in a way that will help young people express their joy and sadness, excitement and loneliness, peace and rage, Haas offers prayers for many occasions: for the classroom, for a prayer service or a retreat, and for opening or closing a school event. The book, just published, is priced at \$7.95.

A revision of our high school textbook and teaching manual *The Hebrew Scriptures*, by Mary Reed Newland, will be available in early February 1999. Entitled **Written on Our Hearts: The Old Testament Story of God's Love**, the revision, like the original, is an in-depth course that covers all the books of the Old Testament, summarizing and explaining the most important stories to guide students in reading directly from the Bible.



The revised edition gives added emphasis to the context and spiritual meaning of the biblical books, and the Psalms are treated in a new chapter. Sidebars featuring prayer in the Old Testament have been added, as well as biblical and historical timelines, new maps, charts, reflection activities that relate the themes of the Scriptures to young people, and a

fresh design in full color. The text is priced at \$13.20 and the teaching manual at \$19.96 for orders totaling over \$200.

The third edition of the popular **Jesus of History, Christ of Faith**, by Tom Zanzig, will be available in early May 1999, with the revised teaching manual out in July. Like the previous edition, the course focuses primarily on Jesus as we know him through the Gospels, set in the context of Jewish history, culture, and beliefs. It also covers Paul's missionary work and theology of Jesus, ending with a chapter on the historical development of Christian and Catholic perspectives on Jesus through the centuries.

This 1999 edition has added more thorough treatments of some aspects of Christology—for instance, the humanity and divinity of Jesus, the role and meaning of Jesus' miracles, Jesus' self-claims, the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist, and the role of sacrifice in salvation. It also has new graphic elements, sidebars, reflection activities, and a glossary of terms. The text is priced at \$12.56 and the teaching manual at \$19.96 for orders totaling over \$200.

To request a complimentary copy of the textbooks and teaching manuals (available to high school religion teachers for review purposes), or to purchase any of the above materials, contact Orders Department, Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320; phone 800-533-8095; fax 800-344-9225.

Our Winning Textbooks!

Two high school textbooks by Saint Mary's Press have recently won awards given by national organizations.

World Religions: A Voyage of Discovery, by Jeffrey Brodd, was selected as the 1998 first-place winner in the category of School Textbooks by the Printing Industries of America. This "Benny" award (named for Ben Franklin) in the print industry is the equivalent of an "Oscar" in the movie industry. It is given to recognize the finest achievement in graphics, design, and printing.

Understanding Catholic Christianity, revised edition, by Thomas Zanzig and Barbara Allaire, received the Catholic Press Association's 1998 second-place award in the category of Educational Books.

We here at Saint Mary's Press are proud of our whole team of dedicated people who produce such high-quality materials, and we're gratified that other organizations recognize that quality, too.

Listserv Connections

Want to be in touch with many others who share your concerns? Join our free **Listerv for Religion Teachers and Campus Ministers**, which is a way to communicate with others by e-mail about whatever topics you want to discuss. To join, send an e-mail message to CHSRITCM@press.smp.org and write "subscribe" in the subject line. For more information, visit our web site at <http://www.smp.org>.

Acknowledgments

The excerpt on page 3 attributed to Augustine of Hippo is quoted from *Context*, 15 June 1997, page 7.

The excerpt on page 5 by the U.S. Catholic bishops is from *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1998), pages 2-3. Copyright © 1998 by the USCC.

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