**PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

**THE ROBERT W. JENSON PAPERS**

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Brian Shetler

**THE ROBERT W. JENSON PAPERS**

**COLLECTION SUMMARY**

**Creator:** Jenson, Robert W., 1930-2017

**Dates:** 1951-2017

**Abstract:** Correspondence, manuscripts, publications, sermons, and other works related to the life and work of noted theologian Robert W. Jenson.

**Extent:** 11 boxes (~4.5 linear feet)

**Language(s)**: English

**Repository:** Princeton Theological Seminary. Karl Barth Center.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Robert W. Jenson has been called “the greatest American theologian since Jonathan Edwards.” The author of 25 books, hundreds of articles, co-founder of the journals *Dialog* and *Pro Ecclesia*, and co-founder of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, Jenson held positions at Luther College, the University of Oxford, Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, St. Olaf College, and the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton.

Born in Eau Claire, Wisconsin on August 2, 1930, Jenson received a BA in Classics from Luther College in 1951 and a Bachelor of Theology from Luther Seminary in 1955. In 1954, he married Blanche Rockne, who would become his greatest theological

collaborator. In 1959, he received his Doctor of Theology, summa cum laude, from the University of Heidelberg, in Germany, where his Doktorvater was Peter Brunner and he had the opportunity to study with such philosophical luminaries as Martin Heidegger

and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

In 1959, Jenson, along with his wife and their one-year-old daughter, Kari, moved to Basel to study with Karl Barth. There, he would complete his dissertation, Cur Deus Homo, on the theology of Barth, who commented at the time, “You have understood me,” and would later mention the young American who had correctly interpreted his theology. The revised thesis was published in 1963 as Alpha and Omega; two subsequent books, Religion against Itself and God after God, are further discourses on Barth.

Raised a Lutheran, Jenson encountered Anglicanism during his time at Oxford and became involved in ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. This focus on ecumenism would continue for the rest of his life. Jenson’s work on the Trinity

was also highly influential. According to David Bentley Hart, “theologians of every stripe should praise him for enunciating a Trinitarian theology with whose biblical shape—that is to say, specifically, his reading of scripture as Trinitarian theology throughout—it is impossible to take issue.” Jenson died on September 5, 2017 at his home in Princeton and is buried directly across the street in the memorial garden of Trinity

Church (Episcopal).

**SCOPE AND CONTENT**

This collection consists of personal papers and documents from the life and work of Robert W. Jenson (1930-2017). Included within these papers are personal correspondence between Jenson and other theologians and academics, mainly from the 1960s through 1980s. The collection also includes an extensive holding of Jenson’s typescripts, manuscripts, and works-in-progress for both publication and public presentation, including sermons.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

This collection was inventoried and processed in the spring and summer of 2022, by Ben Van Haitsma & Steven Kang under the direction of Dr. Brian Shetler, Head of Special Collections and Archives. The finding aid was completed by Dr. Shetler in August 2022. Efforts were made during the processing of the collection to retain as much original order and organization as possible, including maintaining Jenson’s original grouping of materials based on subject and area of discourse.

**ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION**

Series I: Correspondence

Series II: Unpublished Works

Series III: Published Works

Series IV: Sermons and Speeches

Series V: Educational Materials

Series VI: Liturgy Materials

Series VII: Administrative Files

Series VIII: Audio Materials

**CONTAINER LIST**

**Series I: Correspondence**

**Series Description & Arrangement:** Series I Correspondence contains personal correspondence to & from Robert W. Jenson. The series is organized according to Jenson’s original order and organization, including maintaining chronological order by earliest letter in each folder.

**Box 1**

1. Luther College and “the mess”, 1958-1987
2. Letter about Lutheran Journal of Theology, 1960
3. Various Correspondence, 1961-2000
4. Correspondence with the “Standard”, 1962-1969
5. Theologically and Ecclesiastically Important Correspondence, 1963-1968
6. Sentiment, 1963-2019
7. Letters from Oxford, 1967-1973
8. Assorted Correspondence, 1968-1982
9. Letter to Maurice Monhardt, 1970
10. Letter to Martin Heinecken, 1970
11. Assorted Correspondence, 1982-1988
12. Willem Bijlefeld’s Letter to Mark Thomsen, 1984
13. Letter to Theodore Peters on Divine Name, 1985
14. Richard John Neuhaus, 1989-1990
15. Richard John Neuhaus Regarding the ‘Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification’, 1994-1998

**Series II: Unpublished Works**

**Series Description & Arrangement:** Series II Unpublished Works contains typescripts and manuscripts for essays, papers, and other texts by Robert W. Jenson. The series is arranged chronologically by earliest date of creation for each work. Undated works have been placed at the end of the series with approximate date ranges.

**Box 1**

1. Doctrinal Theology, 1951-1952
2. Martin Luther as Preacher, 1952
3. Clement of Rome, 1955
4. Paper for 1963 Meeting of Iowa Society, 1963
5. The Uniqueness of Christ in the World of Religions, 1965
6. Das Problem Der Naturordnungen in der *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, pre-1966
7. Origen and Language, 1966-1968
8. Presence of Christ’s Body, 1966-1968
9. A Paper on the Liberal Arts, pre-1968
10. Exegesis and Theology of the Markan Additions, pre-1968
11. Resliu, 1968

**Box 2**

1. [Developing a Lutheran View on Scriptural Authority], 1969
2. [Barth’s Understanding of the Resurrection], 1969
3. [On Dr. Strangelove], 1969
4. Review of “Worship in the Name of Jesus”, 1969
5. Eschatological Politics and Political Eschatology, 1969
6. The Hermeneutical Role of Film, 1969
7. [On Prayer], 1969
8. Worship as Word and Tone, 1969
9. How the Bible Doesn’t Talk About the Senses, 1969
10. Aspects of Humanization, 1969
11. Kontinuität und Diskontinuität der Testamente als theologisches Problem, 1969
12. Introduction, 1969
13. Einige Aspekte der Christologie in einer pluralistischen Gesellschaft, 1970
14. Orpheus, the Button-Maker and “Real Community”, 1970
15. Thoughts on Church Discipline, with Special Reference to the Discipline of Admission, 1970
16. Some Theological Principles For a Reforming Church Party, 1970
17. In Christ’s Name–Down With School, 1971
18. About Dialog, and the church, and some bits of the theological biography of Robert W. Jenson, 1971
19. Thoughts on the Purpose of Dialog, 1971
20. Pseudo-Historical Comments on the Structure of Dialog, 1971
21. [On Systematic Theology], 1972
22. [On the Lutheran Confessions], 1972
23. [The Context of ‘Justification by Faith Alone’], 1972
24. Review of ‘The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg’, 1974
25. The Reason and Character of the “Great Thanksgiving”, 1974
26. A Statement on the Ordained Ministry, 1974
27. The Division of the Moral Person, 1974
28. A Jeremiad from the New Editor, 1974
29. Eucharist: Its Relative Necessity, Specific Warrant, and Traditional Order, 1975
30. Williamsburg Revisited, 1975
31. The Biblical Norm of Communion Practices, 1975
32. Toward Reform of the Lutheran Liturgical Tradition, 1975
33. A “Great Thanksgiving” For Lutherans?, 1975
34. About This Issue, 1975
35. You Shall Not Kill, 1976
36. [On Freedom], 1976
37. The Church, 1984
38. For A Paper on “Communication Theory”, 1984
39. Karl Barth’s Legacy, 1984
40. [On Islam], 1985
41. Rechtfertigung und Ekklesiologie, 1986
42. Battle of Gettysburg 125th Anniversary, 1988
43. Questions for ELCA, 1993
44. [The Future Development of the Doctrine of God], Undated (c. 1968-1988)
45. [On Marriage and Ordination], Undated (c. 1968-1988)
46. Trinitarian Naming and Sexist Sensibility, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
47. Sovereignty in the Church, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
48. God Recently, for Greymoor, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
49. Apostolicity in the Gospel, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
50. …In One New, Inclusive and Lutheran Church, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
51. [Original Draft of Statement on ‘The Consultation of Theological Education’], Undated (c. 1968-1988)
52. Response to Professor John Smith, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
53. Apologia Jensonis Pro Radicalitate Sua, Undated (c. 1968-1988)

**BOX 3**

1. God, Space and Architecture, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
2. Justification and Ecclesiology, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
3. The Reality of God, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
4. The Bishop as Pastor, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
5. A Statement on “Infant Communion”, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
6. [On Gettysburg Seminary], Undated (c. 1968-1988)
7. The Adequacy of the Confessions for the 20th Century, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
8. Romans 13, Karl Barth and the Trinity, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
9. To the Maryland Synod on Abortion, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
10. Three Identities of One Action, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
11. Celebrating the Sacrament of Civil Righteousness, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
12. The Preacher, the Text, and Certain Dogmas, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
13. Review of ‘The Human Face of God’, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
14. The Meaning and Authority of Scripture in the Life of the Church, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
15. The Last Judgment, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
16. Jesus in the Trinity: Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Christology and Doctrine of Trinity, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
17. Back to the Barricades!, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
18. [Lutheran Theological Tradition], Undated (c. 1968-1988)
19. What Academic Difference Would the Gospel Make?, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
20. [On Infant Baptism], Undated (c. 1968-1988)
21. The Church and Mass Electronic Media: The Hermeneutic Problem, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
22. Churchly Honor and Judge Bork, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
23. Lay and Ordained Ministries, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
24. Athens, Jerusalem and Detroit: Reflections on the Life of Faith and Learning, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
25. What’s That Again?, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
26. The Christian Doctrine of God, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
27. Spoken Futures: A Proposal of Christian Anthropology, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
28. Christian-Jew-Islam, Undated (c. 1968-1988)

**BOX 4**

1. Justification and Ecclesiology, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
2. Colloquium Papers: Response to Colloquium, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
3. Jenson/Hittinger, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
4. Is God One Person?, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
5. A “Protestant Constructive Response” to Christian Unbelief, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
6. Jonathan Edwards and American Freedom, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
7. The Ear, The Eye, and Lutheranism, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
8. Time, the Spirit, and the Unity of the Church, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
9. On Being a Lutheran-Churchly College, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
10. Authority of Scripture in the Church & Christian Doctrine Through Times and Cultures, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
11. “Dann dies ist gnug…:”: Lutheran Conditions for Communion in Holy Things, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
12. An Exegesis of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
13. And Yet There Are Not Three… But One…, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
14. The Mission of the ELCA’s Colleges, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
15. Lutheranism in the 80s, 90s, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
16. Charter for a Corinthian Mission, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
17. Protestantism and the Pope, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
18. In Honor of the 7th Ecumenical Council, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
19. On Jewish-Christian Worship, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
20. Toward a Lutheran Reconstruction of Marian Devotion, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
21. Draft of 3.1.2: The Church as Sacrament, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
22. Draft of Opening for 1.3, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
23. Draft of 2.3.2: The Church as Koinonia, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
24. 4.1 Issues of Principle and 4.1.1 Justification and the Church, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
25. 4.1.2 The Church as Sacrament, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
26. The Last Judgment, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
27. Copies of Papers Done 1999-2003 (1999-2003)
28. On The Possibility of a Divided Magisterium, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
29. On Time and Eternity, In the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
30. On Truth and God, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
31. Speaking To, For and About God, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
32. Christology For Non-Greeks, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
33. Trinity For Non-Greeks, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
34. The Prophets’ Double Vision of Return to Zion, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
35. Patients, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
36. The Logos Ensarkos and Reason, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
37. Gratia Non Tollit Naturam Sed Perficit, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
38. Toward a Theology of Religions, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
39. A Space for God, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
40. Jesus’ Identity as Theological Problem, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
41. A Book of Theology, For Solveig, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
42. Lutheran Conditions for Communion in Holy Things, Undated
43. Untitled, Undated
44. On the Decadence of American Politics, Undated
45. Church and Mass Media, Undated
46. Lex Orandi et Lex Proclemandi, Undated
47. On Deterrence (2 essays), Undated
48. Untitled, Undated

**Series III: Published Works**

**Series Description & Arrangement:** Series III Published Works contains copies of publications written and collected by Robert W. Jenson. The series is organized in chronological order. Undated publications are listed at the end of the series.

**BOX 1**

1. Cur Deus Homo? The Election of Jesus Christ in the Theology of Karl Barth, 1959
2. The Triplex Usus of Worldly Learning, 1962
3. Christ-Dogma and Christ-Image, 1963
4. Wilhelm Dilthey and a Background Problem of Theology, 1963
5. Karl Barth, 20th Century Prophet, 1963
6. The Doxological Concept of History in the Theology of Peter Brunner, 1965
7. Review of “The Gospel of Christian Atheism” by Thomas J.J. Altizer, 1967
8. Review of ‘The Fabric of Paul Tillich’s Theology’, October 1968
9. The Futurist Option in Speaking About God, February 1969
10. He Came Among Us, 1969
11. In Memoriam Karl Barth, 1969
12. Violence as a Mode of Language, 1971
13. Concerning and Illustrating New Orders for the Eucharist, 1971
14. Gott Als Antwert, 1971
15. Response, 1972
16. Liturgy of the Spirit, 1974
17. Review of The Human Face of God, 1974
18. The Eucharist: For Infants?, 1979
19. Review of The Identity of Jesus Christ, 1976
20. The Mandate and Promise of Baptism, 1976
21. A Sermon for the Festival of the Reformation, 1977
22. Review of Christ in a Pluralistic Age, 1977
23. Psalm 32, 1979
24. In This Issue, Plus…, Spring 1980
25. The Hermeneutics of the Electronic Church, November 1980
26. On Abortion: Sorting Out the Questions, 1983
27. The Praying Animal, 1983
28. Seminar on Theological Anthropology, 1984
29. Can Deterrence Be Justified, 1985
30. On Our Liberty, 1987
31. The Evil as Person, 1989
32. The Leuenberg Agreement in North America, 1989
33. Justification as Triune Event, 1995
34. Modernity’s Undermining of its Own Foundations, 1996
35. What Difference Post-Modernity Makes for the Church, 1997
36. Toward a Christian Doctrine of Israel, 2000
37. Second Thoughts About Theologies of Hope, 2000
38. Response to Robert Davis Hughes III, 2001
39. Luther i dag, 2003
40. Response, 2003
41. A Theological Autobiography to Date, 2007
42. What Makes the Church One?**,** 2009
43. Plowshares into Swords? Reflections on Religion and Violence, 2014
44. Returning to Zion: Christian and Jewish Perspectives, 2015
45. [OVERSIZE:] The 7 Days of Creation, 1964

**Series IV: Speeches and Sermons**

**Series Description & Arrangement:** Series IV Speeches and Sermons contains typescripts, manuscripts, and notes related to sermons, speeches, and talks given by Robert W. Jenson. The series is organized in chronological order. Undated works are listed at the end of the series.

**BOX 1**

1. Luther College Chapel Talks, 1965-1966
2. Remarks to the New York City Seminar for Alumni of Luther College, March 20, 1970
3. Lutheran Theology in America: Reassessment and Prospect, August 26-28, 1970
4. Lutheran-Jewish-Roman Catholic Colloquium, November 13-14, 1984
5. Convocation on the New Lutheran Church, 1986-1987
6. Comments on “The Calling of Pastors”, 1987
7. The Defense of Reason, 1998
8. Some Trinitarian Aspects of Church Unity, 17-20 November 2003
9. Lutheranism and the ELCA, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
10. PLU Speeches, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
11. On Luther at Notre Dame, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
12. Seminar on Theological Anthropology, Undated (c. 1968-1988)
13. Sermons Pt 1., Undated (c. 1971-1981)
14. Sermons Pt 2., Undated (c. 1981-1991)
15. Sermons Pt 3., Undated (c. 1992-)
16. The Necessity of Civic Religion (Niebuhr Lecture), Undated (c. 1989-1998)
17. The Community of Resurrection, Undated (c. 1989-1998)
18. The Special Service of the Church, Undated (c. 1998-2017)
19. [Skype Speech on Constructive and Destructive Provocations], Undated (c. 1998-2017)

**Series VI: Educational Materials**

**Series Description & Arrangement:** Series VI Educational Materials contains documents related to Robert W. Jenson’s work as a student and teacher. These include lecture notes, class assignments, and course materials. The series is organized in chronological order. Undated works are listed at the end of the series.

**BOX 1**

1. Professor Dr. Brunner’s Seminar: über Barth und Elert, 1958
2. Student Work, pre-1968
3. Barth Lectures, 1966
4. Trinity Lectures, 1968
5. Justification, 1966-1968
6. Dogmatics I, 1968-1969
7. Justification/Grace, 1972
8. Report on Sabbatical Year, 1972-1973
9. 2.301 Theological Foundations, 1978-1979
10. 2.301 Introduction to Systematic Theology, 1981
11. CONS 036 Aquinas and Barth: Contrasts and Convergences, 1986
12. [Academic Convocation], 1988
13. 19th Century Theology, Undated 1968-1988
14. Barth for Wittenberg, Undated 1968-1988
15. Theology 222, Undated 1968-1988
16. Intro, Undated 1968-1988
17. Consultation on Theological Education, Undated 1968-1988
18. The Ministry of the Word and Education Therefor, Undated 1968-1988
19. [Proposals Regarding Curriculum], Undated 1968-1988
20. Manuscripts and Typescripts for Dog. 1, Undated 1968-1988

**Series VI: Liturgy Materials**

**Series Description & Arrangement:** Series VI Liturgy Materials contains notes, research materials, manuscripts, and typescripts created and collected by Robert W. Jenson related to liturgy and liturgical study. The series is organized in chronological order, with undated materials listed at the end of the series.

**BOX 1**

1. The Passion According to Saint John, 1970
2. Ezekiel, 1973
3. Sanctus, 1974
4. Discussion, 1975
5. The Great Thanksgiving, 1975
6. Christmas Pageant, Undated (1968-1988)
7. For the Altar Book, Undated (1968-1988)
8. Liturgy: Part 1, Undated (1968-1988)
9. Liturgy: Part 2, Undated (1968-1988)
10. Whitsunday Service, Undated (1968-1988)

**Series VII: Administrative Files**

**Series Description & Arrangement:** Series VII Administrative Files contains documents related to projects, committees, and other administrative duties of Robert W. Jenson. The series is organized in chronological order. Undated works are listed at the end of the series.

**BOX 1**

1. Report of the Issues Workshop on Confirmation and First Communion, 1970
2. Minutes of the Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue, 1971
3. Project for an Investigation of God and Democracy, 1974
4. [Court Adjudication on the Lutheran Ministerial Health Benefits Plan], 1980
5. Consultations on the Role of the Theater, 1986
6. The Pilgrim Project, 1986
7. Task Force on Theology, Undated

**Series VIII: Audio Materials**

**Series Description & Arrangement:** Series VIII Audio Materials contains cassette tape recordings of speeches, sermons, lectures, and events involving and/or related to Robert W. Jenson. The series is arranged in chronological order.

**BOX 1**

1. Untitled, Session 1, 1975
2. Untitled, Session 2 (2 tapes), 1975
3. Jenson Convocation I: Opening; Colin Gunton Address, 1988
4. Jenson Convocation III: Evening Eucharist; Carl Braaten Preaching; RW Jenson Preaching, 1988
5. Jenson Convocation IV: Gilbert Meilander Discussion, 1988
6. Jenson Convocation V: William Werpehowski Address, 1988
7. Jenson Convocation VI: Response by RW Jenson, 1988
8. St. Olaf College Chapel, 1993
9. St. Olaf College Chapel, 1995
10. St. Olaf College Chapel, 1996
11. St. Olaf College Chapel, 1996
12. Jenson I: The Church as Anticipation of the Kingdom, Undated
13. Jenson II: The Church in Heaven, Undated
14. Jenson III: Pentecost, Baptism and Resurrection, Undated