

### C. On Scientists/researchers

These scholars will have greater resources. If they are allowed to publish freely in e-journals (and have this count toward tenure, etc.), there will be more information available for all.

### Question 3.

The only source on the subject of Franz Bibfeldt I could come up with is a book published last year by Martin E. Marty and Jerald C. Brauer, both religion scholars. The book The Unrelieved Paradox is a humorous "study" of the theology of Franz Bibfeldt, whom I strongly suspect is a fictional scholar who has, his nonexistence notwithstanding, been cited by Marty (and perhaps others) to appear as a genuine source. Marty is holder of the "Donnelly Stool of Bibfeldt Studies", (a humorous take on "Chair"?) and founder of the "Bibfeldt Foundation". The review, in *Publishers Weekly*, August 15, 1994 (p.56), states that the book is a look at "arcane, academic Christian theology". Bibfeldt is most likely a parody or amalgam of crusty religious scholars with whom Marty has no doubt had experiences throughout his own lengthy scholarly career.

To Carl Unconer.



## QUESTION 3:

Franz Bibfeldt is/was a mid to late 20th Century scholar of theology of enduring persistence and influence. There are numerous indications that Bibfeldt has been a prolific author during his scholarly career, and continued to refine his theology throughout his years as a scholar. Although, as noted by Scott Appleby in a lecture on the scholar, quoted by John Easton in the 2-1-95 issue of the *University of Chicago Magazine*, Bibfeldt's wife, Hilda Braunschweiger Bibfeldt, indicated that the output figures of 40 books and 4000 articles was wildly exaggerated. Bibfeldt has had a long and illustrious career. He had early training in church history and in 1927 submitted his doctoral thesis to the University of Worms on "The Problem of the Year Zero," which explored the missing year between 1 BC and 1 AD.

Numerous sources, including the Chicago Tribune, suggest that Bibfeldt was first cited by Robert Howard Clausen in 1947 as a term paper footnote for a class at Concordia Seminary. Subsequently Clausen and a fellow student, Martin Marty, spent the next several years discussing the nuances of Bibfeldt's thought until he gradually began to take on consistency and life. The two seminarians included numerous references to Bibfeldt in the student magazine at Concordia. The first significant published reference to Bibfeldt was in a book review by Marty in the 12/19/51 issue of *The Concordia Seminarian* of Bibfeldt's seminal work, *The Relieved Paradox*.

The esteemed Bibfeldt scholar John Easton in his recent article, "The Unbearable Lightness of being Bibfeldt," notes that Bibfeldt was never officially connected with one particular institution but was more or less based at the University of Chicago Divinity School where a sort of annual Bibfeldt symposium is held. According to Easton, notable Bibfeldt work's include *Both/And* which was in reply to Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* and attempted to affirm all propositions simultaneously and its sequel *Both/And and/or Either/Or*. In response to Karl Barth's pamphlet *Nein (No)* Bibfeldt produced *Veilleight (Perhaps)*. Bibfeldt was profoundly influenced as well by the writing of humorist Charles Shutz in his concept of "wishy-washy."



Sam Portaro in a 1992 lecture on Bibfeldt, quoted in *Criterion*, noted that Bibfeldt's definitive work on the pastoral care of the dead was expounded on in *The Minister as Mortician*. One of Bibfeldt's most influential articles in this area was "I'm Okay, You're DOA." A rare manuscript is Bibfeldt's "A Pragmatist's Perception of the Sayings of Jesus," in which he offered that any saying of Jesus which is too hard to follow is to be understood to mean the opposite of what it literally says. Portaro quotes extensively from Richard Rosengarten's "Franz Bibfeldt The Life, And Scholarship on the Life," 30 March 1988. Another important biography about Bibfeldt is *The Quest for the Historical Bibfeldt* whose author is variously Robert Grant, according to Easton, and Landon, according to Robin Lovin in the article "The Breakdown of Consciousness," in the Autumn 1980 issue of *Criterion*.

The most recent publication about Bibfeldt is a series of essays published in 1994 in *The Unrelieved Paradox: Studies in the Theology of Franz Bibfeldt* edited by Martin Marty and Jerald Brauer, which has been favorably reviewed in *Christian Century* as well as *Publishers Weekly*. The book includes drawings of Bibfeldt, letters from his wife, a partial bibliography of his works and photocopies of historical documents relating to the scholar.

Michael Hirsley of the Chicago Tribune has written that since the early 1970s an occasional Bibfeldt festival has been held at the University of Chicago where students present lectures on the latest in Bibfeldt scholarship. The Donnelly Stool of Bibfeldt Studies offers a \$29.95 honorarium to the presenters, if they have the nickel change. In the 1987 lecture, quoted in *Criterion*, Robin Lovin noted Bibfeldt's new area of study in the theology of political praxis. Lovin notes that Bibfeldt's brief article on the subject was rejected by a number of major publishers but finally appeared in print in the March issue of *Penthouse*, where it was largely overlooked. However, the theology lead to the opening of a think tank in Washington DC, the Wahlverwandschaft Institute, and moonlighting opportunities for Bibfeldt as a fund raiser for the evangelist Oral Roberts.



Bibfeldt's fame as a "scholar and gentleman" has spread widely. In 1994 *The Wittenburg Door*, an evangelical publication, named Bibfeldt Theologian of the Year. According to Easton, Bibfeldt has been listed among credits on television programs, in catalogs of bookstores and has received signed autographs from public figures as varied as Jimmy Carter, a *Playboy* bunny and Chairman Mao. Bibfeldt has been a long and productive scholarly career, and recently he has seemed to be in retirement. However, periodically new information about his scholarship efforts and directions in theology seem to arise, especially from the University of Chicago.

His contribution to scholarly communication has been an interesting phenomenon. Since he was first cited in 1947 he has been an inspiration to generations of scholars of theology. His role among modern theologians has been to poke fun at those who have to be relevant to everyone and everything. Easton notes that Bibfeldt is about Proteanism. He is the man who succeeded in creating very little out of absolutely nothing but calling it scholarship anyway. It is important that scholars do not fall into the error of taking themselves and the scholarly communication process too seriously. Franz Bibfeldt is about being able to take life more lightly and being able to see how entrenched the process has become.



In this short essay all references to particular authors on the subject of Bibfeldt are included in the bibliography following the text. An exhaustive keyword search, though interestingly not an author search, of a variety of resources including Sabio databases, Carl Uncover, Dialog and Religion Index One, revealed listings for Franz Bibfeldt ranging from daily newspapers to periodicals in the field of theology. An initial search of a biography database produced no hits for Franz Bibfeldt, which was curious, and stimulated thinking about how to approach the question about who he was. A subject search was launched and an initial hit was made on the Expanded Academic Index database on Sabio which then lead to Carl Uncover and proceeded to Religion Index One.

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research libraries. This situation can become a problem. To borrow a book/article, the average cost is \$29.55,<sup>6</sup> not cheap at all.

Ten years from now, will the E-publications become a major supply of our libraries? It is hard to predict. It not only depends on the technical issue, cost issues, legal issues, investment issues, but also on social and traditional issues as well. The reason that Internet has developed so fast in recent years is from the political and commercial interests. The conservative nature of the scholarly community is facing an almost irresistible challenge. If academic rewarding system can accept a present article in a electronic form, then the electronic publishing may develop faster.

I intentionally did not mention the middle-man distributions agent. I knew that libraries can not avoid them. They are the product of a free market. They should always act on good ethical ground.

### Question 3

Franz Bibfeldt is not a real person. Martin E. Marty, professor of history at the University of Chicago, and Jerald C. Brauer, Dean Emeritus of Chicago's Divinity School, made him up.

Publishers Weekly /August 15, 1994 announced a new book titled "The Unrelieved Paradox: Studies in the Theology of Franz Bibfeldt". This is probably the first time that Franz Bibfeldt ever appeared in a bibliographical record.

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<sup>6</sup> Truesdell, Cheryl B., " Is Access a Viable alternative to Ownership? A review of Access Performance", Academic Librarianship, Sep. 1994,p.201



It took me a long time to come to the above conclusion. Here is my story.

First, I thought he was real: I thought he had a career in the academic life; or publication history; or memberships in scholarly organizations; or, maybe some one had cited him: he had to do some thing to have some one preparing his biography...

I started with the NETWORK DATABASE (Station #9), and found there were no remarks. I thought that "some one is preparing his biography" means his biography has not come out yet.

So, I turned to the Citation Index in order to find someone who cited him, but no record was found. Because he had some "significance to the" Scholarly Communication, I looked the Social Science Citation Index first, then the Science Citation Index, and the Art & Humanity Citation Index. There were no results. These three indexes collect citation information from 1956 up to now. I thought Franz Bibfeldz might never have written any journal article, but books. Or, his publications were likely recorded in the pre-1956 indexes or catalogs.

I searched OCLC, authority file, the National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints and Supplement, with no results. Franz Bibfeldt never wrote a book! I concentrated on periodical indexes: Poole's Index to Periodical Literature 1802-1906; International Index 1907-1965; Social Sciences and Humanities Index 1965-1974; with no results. He might not be a American. His name sounded like German. I checked IBZ and German encyclopedia, with no results.

Because he had "tenure", I went through National Faculty Directory 1970-1995, with no results. It told me that he either



retired since 1970, or he might have died. I therefore went through the Obituaries From the Times 1951-1960-1975; the Annual Obituary 1980-1993, with no results. Then, he might be a scholar in the early part of this century, or even before this century; or he might even be a holocaust victim, and died during the WWII. I went on Internet, Gopher and other databases, with no results.

At this point, I began to suspicious that his "publications", "tenure", "career" had fallen into some gap that our library does not have enough holdings to bring him up! I went back to the Sheehy's Book, trying to find some thing , such as directories, other indexes from the general works. But it is very difficult to tell which reference book would work.

I knew that Infortrac has a hypertext function, and I checked, with no results. With so much frustration, I walked into a public library. The librarian said to me "why don't you try the expansion key?" Expansion key? I never noticed it before. I did try. It was a huge surprise. Franz Bibfeldt showed up! I said to myself:"Now, I know who you are. You are a Theologist."

I called UA reference desk, and they answered there were no such books available in Arizona. I have to wait six weeks to get it through interlibrary loan. I called five book stores in town. No one had it in stock. The fastest they can get for me a copy is within two weeks! I said, "Forget it!"

I went back to Internet. I got full bibliographical information about the book as follows: (from CNIDR BKS database)

The Unrelieved Paradox: Studies in the Theology of Franz Bibfeldt.

Author: Martin E. Marty and Jerald C.Brauer.



Publisher: Grand Rapids, Mich. : Erdmans, c1994.

Pages: xii, 231p. : ill. ; 23cm.

Notes: includes bibliographical references.

Subjects: Theology, Doctrinal-History-20th century-Humor.

Theology, Doctrinal-History-20th century-Miscellanies.

Why is it "Humor" ? I still could not believe that Franz Bibfeldt might be a non-person. I knew the best way to answer all questions is to get the book. Since it was not available immediately, I started to look-up the author, Martin E. Marty. I found the UA library collected fifty titles under this name. I went through each title in order to find some thing that is about the theology of Franz Bibfeldt. In 1986, Martin E. Marty edited a book titled "A Handbook of Christian Theologians". This book is under a subject heading similar to the subject heading of "The Unrelieved Paradox", it is "Theology, Doctrinal - History-20th century-Handbooks,manuals,etc." The difference is that one is "Humor", one is "Handbooks, manuals,etc". I went through this handbook. I did not find Franz Bibfeldt. I checked "Organizations Master Index First Edition" (Denise M. Allard, Editor), there is no such name like Bibfeldt Foundation also. My suspicions began to peak strongly.

I went back to read each word which printed on page 56, Publisher weekly/August 15, 1994, the word "spoof" caught my eye again. I looked it up in Webersters Dictionary, which says "spoof 1.v.i. (old-fash., pop) to fool, pretend v.t.(old-fash.,pop.) to deceive (someone) 2. n. (old-fash.,pop) a hoax a humorous,light, but telling parody [name of a game, invented (c.1889) by Arthur Roberts, Eng. comedian]



I knew that either Franz Bibfeldt or the theology are fake. I knew that Martin E. Marty is a well established theology scholar. The new book is about Christian theology. Then the name Franz Bibfeldt could be his creature, on other words, a fake name. But why did he create a fake name? I do not know. I further checked the "Book Review" (to the March of 1995), there is no other review on the new title available.

There are two ways to give a good answer to each part of question three. 1. get the book. 2. call Martin E. Marty, or write to him. His address: Divinity School of University of Chicago 1025-35 E. 58th St. Chicago IL 60637-1407. His E-Mail address can be found from his newly published journal articles (Check Social Science Citation Index). A biography of his was published on the "Current Biography Yearbook" (1968). UA library collected 50 titles under his name.

About question "What is Bibfeldt's significance for scholarly communication"? I think there are four:

1. by looking for the Franz Bibfeldt, I learn that how scholarly communication system works: Scholar writes, publishers publish not only his work but also the bibliographical tools contains the work, library collect the work and the bibliographical tools, provide further information for retrieving it.

2. through five hundred years of printing history, librarians and publishers develop a strong bibliographical control web, the electronic bibliographical control technique make the web stronger and more effective ( we can only find Franz Bibfeldt through the Infortrac CD ROM so far.)



3. There are still many gaps which are not covered by the present bibliographical control materials. Many works have been lost, or never organized by scholars, which needs to be explained.

4. Uniform the language for electronic access is necessary.

#### Question 1

In his paragraph, the author, Irving Louis Horowitz , posted four basic view points under one context:

1. Functions of books
2. the interrelationship of information and knowledge
3. the pattern of scholar work
4. the future of scholarly communication.

The context is new information era characterized by computerized database, CD-ROMs, electronic dissemination, etc.

Some parts I agree with him, and some I have little doubt.

About "Functions of books". Irving Louis Horowitz said "the book may become less important as a source of primary data and information." I believe he meant printed paper books, not so called META books. I believe he meant scientific books, not so much social science, art humanities books. He did not make clear what kind of books, reference books? novels? research reports? biographies? textbooks? children's books? Generally, since the birth of journals and the invention of radio and television, that "the book is less important as a source of primary data and information" becomes a trend. It all depends in which period of time and to what he is comparing. If what he said is completely true, how does one



Franz Bibfeldt is a fictitious theologian who was created 48 years ago by Martin Marty and other seminarians at Concordia Seminary. According to Marty, who is now a professor of modern Christian history at the University of Chicago Divinity School, his freshman year classmate quoted Bibfeldt in a term paper in 1947 to protest the closing of the Concordia library on Sundays. (He also had a paper due the next day.) Marty's classmate received an "A" on his term paper and over the next few years the two seminarians theorized about Bibfeldt's beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

The two students began to write articles for the student magazine in which they cited Bibfeldt. Others at the Seminary began to go along with the joke including the Concordia library and bookstore and Professor Jaroslav Pelikan [Ph.D. '46] who announced his plans to write *From Kierkegaard to Bibfeldt*.<sup>2</sup>

In 1951 Marty wrote a review of Bibfeldt's *The Relieved Paradox* for the *Concordia Seminarian* in which he praised Bibfeldt for his criticism of the dialectical theologian movement. Distinguished theologians soon began quoting Bibfeldt in speeches and conversations.

In the 1970s the University of Chicago Divinity School began holding an annual Bibfeldt festival known as Bifeldtian Bullsgeschichte to which scholars come to honor the theologian. The Bibfeldt Foundation pays \$29.95 to the lecturer at each Bibfeldt festival. University benefactors donated money in order to establish the Donnelley Stool of

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<sup>1</sup> Easton, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*



Bibfeldt Studies. There is a glass case at the Divinity School which contains Bibfeldt memorabilia.

The annual Bibfeldt festival always includes a brief biographical history of Bibfeldt. Bibfeldt was conceived on February 2 by his parents Friedrich and Brunhilda after a Candlemas party in the backseat of a Volkswagen. He was born and baptized on November 1, 1897, (or 1899, reports vary) All-Saint's Day, in Safe-Hast near Grossenknetten, Oldenburg, Niedersachsen, Germany. At a young age, Bibfeldt wanted to be an athlete but despite "aptitude on the balance beam" he failed.<sup>3</sup> He then failed in a brief career in the military and turned to theology. The Bibfeldt coat-of-arms depicts Proteus on a weathervane and contains the motto "I dance to the tune that is played."<sup>4</sup> Bibfeldt also owns an invisible wire-haired terrier which is registered with the American Kennel Club.

Bibfeldt wrote his doctoral dissertation, "The Problem of the Year Zero" in 1927 at the University of Worms. In this paper, Bibfeldt argued that the year between 1 A.D. and 1 B.C. is missing from history. (This theory accounts for Bibfeldt's suffering from the rare condition of 'calendar-impairment' which causes him to write about trends a year after everyone else.)<sup>5</sup> Bibfeldt's thesis was not received well at first but scholars have claimed that it indicates the trend of searching for the missing middle that is prevalent in all his subsequent publications.

Bibfeldt worked in Germany for many years where he wrote 35 books and many articles on topics such as fundamentalism, the death of

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<sup>3</sup> Easton, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Steinfels, Sec. A, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Hirsley, "Scholars Gather to Toast a Legend," p. 7.



God, deconstructive polytheism, and feminism.<sup>6</sup> He has also written a collection of pragmatic paraphrasing of Jesus' sayings.<sup>7</sup> One of Bibfeldt's better known writings is "Both/And" which was a response to Kierkegaard's "Either/Or." When this work was not well received, Bibfeldt wrote "Both/And and/or Either/Or."<sup>8</sup> In "I'm OK, You're DOA," Bibfeldt addressed pastoral care for the dead and called attention to the boredom that dead people face every day. With this article Bibfeldt started to organize a ministry for the dead that would help them handle problems such as housing discrimination. He abandoned this movement soon after, stating that "the dead, merely by being dead, are already coping."<sup>9</sup>

Bibfeldt started visiting America in the 1950s and spent most of the 1960s in California in cults and various religious centers. Bibfeldt was strongly affected by Charles Schultz, author of the cartoon strip "The Peanuts," particularly the concept of "wishy-washy."<sup>10</sup> In the 1980s, after a two-week package vacation in Cancun, Bibfeldt focused on the problems of political theology. In the following years Bibfeldt dabbled with televangelism and later wrote some fiction, inventing a American Church historian.<sup>11</sup>

Since 1983, Bibfeldt's writings have become scarce. Some even think that he may be dead. Last year, documents spanning Bibfeldt's career were published in *The Unrelieved Paradox: Studies in the Theology of Franz Bibfeldt*.

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<sup>6</sup> Easton, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Hirsley, "Fictitious Theologian Wins Praise -- and Laughter," Sec. B, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Easton, p.21.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*



Marty has said that he created Bibfeldt in order to poke fun at theologians and academe in general.<sup>12</sup> Bibfeldt's constant wavering among issues and beliefs is apparently a parody of the tendency that many theologians have to embrace the Zeitgeist, or go with the spirit of the times.<sup>13</sup> The references that theologians make to Bibfeldt often remind their colleagues to rethink what they are doing.

Fictional scholars like Bibfeldt are important to scholarly communication not only because they help academics from taking themselves and their colleagues too seriously, but also because they remind scholars not to believe everything they read in scholarly journals and hear from others in their fields. There have probably been a fair number of theologians who have unknowingly cited Bibfeldt thinking that he actually existed. Scholarly journals may have also printed articles with citations to Bibfeldt unaware of the hoax. Luckily for Marty, the only punishment he received when his hoax was revealed was being sent on assignment to Chicago rather than London.<sup>14</sup> Not all pranksters would be so lightly punished and even rewarded by others joining in on the hoax. While the creation of fictitious scholars may be viewed by some as quaint and humorous, others may equate it to doctoring data or scholarly fraud.

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<sup>12</sup> Hirsley, "Scholars Gather to Toast a Legend," p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Easton, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Hirsley, "Theologian Writes Stuff of Which Legends are Made," Sec. 1, p.1.



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