I am honored to provide the tribute for Philip Reynolds on the occasion of his retirement.

Philip Lyndon Reynolds is the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Medieval Christianity at The Candler School of Theology. Any time your post bears the same name as your institution, you are doing something right. Philip was born in 1950, and he earned his BA from Oxford University in 1973 and his PhD from the University of Toronto in 1986. He came to Emory in 1992, and I arrived in 1995, but I first really got to know Professor Reynolds in connection with three projects we both participated in that were run under the auspices of John Witte and Emory’s Center for the Study of Law and Religion. The first project was on “Sex, Marriage, and the Family in the Religions of the Book” (2001-2006); the second was “The Child in Law, Religion, and Society” (2003-2006); the third was on “The Pursuit of Happiness” (2007-2010). Philip chaired the Pursuit of Happiness sessions, which were funded by the Templeton Foundation, and the faculty participating included a number of notable philosophers, theologians, historians, psychologists, and sociologists from around the world. In all three of these contexts, I was impressed by Philip’s profound understanding of the Church Fathers, especially Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. He also put me on to Aelred of Rievaulx (1110 – 1167), the English Cistercian monk who authored of *The Mirror of Charity*.

Three pairs of words from my interactions with Philip have come to define him for me, to the extent that one can ever define a fellow human being: “agape” and “caritas,” “uti” and “frui,” and “deponent” and “gobsmacked.”

Before meeting Philip, I had long been dismayed by Augustine’s ambivalent account of love. When commenting on the Bible and Matthew 22’s two great love commandments, Augustine readily grants that there are two distinct objects of agapic love: God and the neighbor. Only God is to be loved obediently – with all our heart, mind, and strength – but both God and one’s fellow human beings are appropriate foci of attention and can be loved for their own sakes. Indeed, the biblical Augustine recognizes that, following God’s own kenosis in the Incarnation and on the cross, human agape typically bestows value on the neighbor self-sacrificially. In his more neo-Platonic moments, however, Augustine construes Christian love distinctively as “caritas,” which is an essentially self-interested appraisal of worth. As schooled eros, Augustinian caritas is directed only at what is truly excellent, entirely immutable, and fully satisfying, which suggests that God is the only proper object of love. Indeed, the neo-Platonic Augustine is often accused of depicting Christian love as “selfish,” relating to other people only as instruments for one’s own flourishing and ultimate communion with God. One does not really love another human being, as such; one loves God in them or one loves through them to get to God. At most, one
may love a fellow creature only as they will be perfected in eternity, not as they are, sinful warts and all, in time.

The charge of selfishness finds traditional support in Augustine’s discussion of “uti” and “frui” in On Christian Doctrine. There Augustine distinguishes between uti, which means to use something in an effort to achieve something else, and frui, which means to enjoy something so as to rest with satisfaction in it. He notoriously avers at one point that people are to be “used” and only the Trinity is to be “enjoyed.” Now, to be sure, Augustine does not mean by uti the abuse or manipulation of others; he is not endorsing interpersonal cruelty or neglect but rather cautioning us against idolatry. Even other people ought not to retard our faithful ascent to God as the Summum Bonum, according to Augustine. Even so, neo-Platonic caritas sounds to me more like enlightened self-interest or prudence than like biblical agape or altruism.

In spite of this conflicted vision, I believed for years that there was one place, even in On Christian Doctrine, where Augustine leaves the door open to loving other human beings directly and for their own sakes. On page 9 of the D.W. Robinson translation, Augustine writes: “Some things are to be enjoyed, others to be used, and there are others which are to be enjoyed and used.” “Others are to be both used and enjoyed” … reading this, I thought to myself, okay the Bishop is referring here to people. On the upward path of love’s dialectic, one “uses” people to get to God and the Good, but, as perhaps with Plato, there can be a downward path in which a mature virtue returns to the world to “enjoy” people, caring especially for the weak and vulnerable. (Cf. Plato on the philosopher king returning to the cave to liberate benighted souls.)

Enter Professor Reynolds. When I shared this optimistic thought with Philip via email, he responded by calmly announcing: “Robinson forgets that ‘uti’ and ‘frui’ are deponent verbs, passive in form but active in meaning, and translates them as passives. It’s the kind of mistake that would make a novice blush.” Philip then called my attention to the newer R.P.H. Green translation of On Christian Doctrine (p. 9), which makes clear that what Augustine actually said is: “There are some things which are to be enjoyed, some which are to be used, and some whose function is both to enjoy and use.” People both enjoy and use, but, for Augustine, they are only to be used for the sake of the God-relation. With this, my abiding hope that Augustinian caritas might yet be squared with biblical agape was forever smashed, and I found myself mumbling a very British word that I had heard Philip use some time before. “I’m gobsmacked,” I said to myself, and to this day I hold that if one begins with eros and preferential desire, you will never get to Christ-like love and the cross. We must rely on the divine initiative to descend gracefully to us, rather than beginning with ourselves and attempting to storm heaven.

This revelation helped provide, in turn, my response to the multi-year “Pursuit of Happiness” seminars that Philip adroitly chaired. I realized that Judaism and Christianity both shout: “Away with navel-gazing and all eudaimonistic starting points for ethics and theology!” The pursuit of
happiness is not an inappropriate end, but it is an impossible beginning. This is why Jesus supplanted “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39) with his final love commandment of “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). We do not naturally know how to love ourselves properly, so we require a holy model to set us right. If we start with generic human subjectivity, either we will recognize our sins and fall into despair, or we will fail to recognize our sins and lapse into hubris. No, we need lives touched by the supernatural.

Where do we find such holy models? There is first and foremost Jesus Christ, of course, but, at the risk of sounding sycophantic or blasphemous, I believe another example is leaving us.

Philip Reynolds is himself deponent, retiring and retiring but responsive and responsible. Again, a deponent *verb* is one that is passive in form but active in meaning, and Philip is certainly that. In him, still waters *as well as scholarship and friendship* run deep. But he is also a deponent *noun*. A deponent is someone who gives evidence or issues a deposition in a legal case, and Philip is that too. He is God’s quiet witness, manifesting the fact that, in the trials of life, silence speaks, happiness is more likely to be found if not pursued, and sacraments can be located in everyday life. Like that other Catholic sage in Protestant England, Shakespeare, Philip is an articulate friend to both Jew and Gentile, prince and commoner. He is, need I say, a good friend to me.

Professor Reynolds is too humble to tout such things, but on March 8 of 2018 he gave the keynote address at the Inaugural Congress of the European Academy of Religion in Bologna, Italy. His lecture was entitled “Continuity and Change in the Story of Marriage as a Sacrament,” and it seems fitting that it was delivered at the site of the oldest still extant university in the world. (Having been established in 1088, the University of Bologna beats out Philip’s alma mater, Oxford, by eight years.) Once more I repeat the repetition: as an historian, Philip himself embodies continuity and change, passion and action, in ways we cannot live without. We are dependent on our deponents. They keep alive the past in the present and the sacred in the profane, thereby allowing us to build a meaningful future based on both time and eternity.

Again to embarrass Philip, I register that he received the prestigious Haskins Medal in 2019, given annually by the Medieval Academy of America (MAA) for “a distinguished book in the field of medieval studies.” The medal was first awarded in 1940, and is presented in honor of the medieval historian Charles Homer Haskins, the founder and second president of the academy who funded the award in his will. In Philip’s case, the prize was for his 2016 volume, *How Marriage Became One of the Sacraments*, published by Cambridge University Press. Inspired by Philip’s exegesis of Saint Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine*, I went back and looked at the language of the Haskins trust and its original medal ceremony. It turns out that Mr. Haskins wrote his last testament in Latin and that the medal was meant to be a kind of nepotistic chain letter, with the award intended to honor Mr. Haskins’s “Mother” and her progeny.
Unfortunately, the executor of Mr. Haskins’s estate also failed to recognize a deponent verb and thus failed to see that the subsequent selection committees actually were to invite scholars to give the medal, rather than receive it – rather like the Grand Marshall at the Kentucky Derby each year hands out the lush blanket of roses to the winning horse. So I must sadly report, Philip, that MAA wants her medallion back.

To replace it, The Candler School of Theology would like to give you this gift. It is a rare *Life* magazine from May 26, 1947, the cover story of which is on “The Life of Medieval Man.” It is but a small token in light of the gifts you have given us, but we trust you will enjoy it or at least use it. Saint Luke reports Jesus as saying, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), but that would sound self-congratulatory of me in this moment, so let me rather echo Jesus’ “those who want to save their life will lose it” (Matthew 16:25). Wait … are there deponent verbs in Aramaic? Oh heck, let’s just agree that one who gives his Life/life for a friend is practicing the truest form of agape (cf. John 15:13). You have certainly given much of your life to us here at Candler, Philip, and we thank you.

Seriously, Philip, you are the real thing, and Candler will soon be presenting you with your real gift, which I believe is a picture of Emory. Thanks again …