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Good morning, and welcome! My name is Jan Ziolkowski, and as director of Dumbarton Oaks I take pleasure in welcoming you and in calling to order these proceedings. The topic of this symposium puts all of us in a few odd situations. My original sheet of notes bore as the heading the words “In the Beginning of the Holy Apostles,” but the phraseology smacked too biblical. We would not want to make gospel out of apostles.

Putting aside the thought of the introduction, my mind turned to the question of who the apostles would be. Two candidates are obviously Margaret Mullett and Bob Ousterhout. Bob would presumably be the quondam Saul of Tarsus, Paul himself. Margaret is harder to identify, but let me try the first-century Christian Junia, mentioned in Romans 16:7. Whereas Paul the Apostle taught the gospel of Christ to the first-century world, Margaret and Bob have two and a half days to teach the gospel of the Holy Apostles. I am not sure what we do with the arithmetic that the program lists thirteen other speakers. By my reckoning we would have three Judases. Stay tuned as to their identities.

To move from Scripture to pop culture, speaking of Holy Apostles makes me feel like Robin in Batman. To those of you not familiar with the wingman of the caped crusader, the boy wonder comes forth with an endless array of unique exclamations. In investigating, I found on Wikipedia a comprehensive list of sayings that Robin uttered in the sixties TV series. Although immense (where do these people find the time?), the roll call does not include Holy Apostles. It goes, in alphabetical order, from Holy Alter Ego and Holy Anagram to Holy Apparition and (a personal favorite) Holy Armadillo.

Quite apart from the expletives of comic book characters, all of us must have heard humorous or euphemistic interjections reminiscent of our symposium title, such as holy cow, holy mackerel, holy moley and its Latino cousin holy guacamole, holy smoke, and a couple that I cannot repeat in polite company.

As for the second term in the expression, apostle stands in a yin and yang relationship with a word that neophytes sometimes make the mistake of confusing with it, namely, apostate. In actuality, the two have nothing in common apart from the prefix apo-. A much closer relationship obtains between apostle and epistle. That common ground makes our symposium title doubly appropriate to the symposiarch Margaret Mullett, since she has made innumerable apostles for Byzantine studies, and since no one has plumbed Byzantine letters more extensively.
If you sense an implication that Margaret and Bob themselves form a dynamic duo, you are right. They have assembled for this event a whole squad of Byzantinist superheroes, most of them already well-known in the Gotham City known as Georgetown. James Carder, long-term staff member and onetime junior fellow. Rob Nelson, former junior fellow, fellow, and senior fellow. Danny Ćurčić, who has been a fellow and senior fellow. Scott Johnson, who has been a fellow as well as a four-year teaching fellow. I cannot take the time to name everyone who has been intimately allied to this institution, but I must at least touch upon the names of Paul Magdalino, Ruth Macrides, Henry Maguire, and Bob Ousterhout, because of their many past and present connections.

The support that Dumbarton Oaks extends to those in Byzantine studies warrants contemplating and celebrating as the institution enters its seventy-fifth year. It is worth pausing to consider the amount of funding that has been provided over three quarters of a century in junior fellowships, fellowships, summer fellowships, summer schools, one-month stipends, visiting scholarships, and more, to say nothing of these heavily subvented symposia.

I hope that the Blisses would judge their philanthropy well-maintained, and the results of it commensurate with the generosity that they displayed in conveying to Harvard University their house and grounds, collections, and other property. I trust also that we allow ourselves moments of appreciation to them for what they left, as well as to those who toil to maintain it for us. By that last remark I point toward the passionately devoted and highly capable staff that works hard together to make these events happen, and who deserve recognition not just in the isolated moments when this or that goes awry, but even more in the many hours and days when the graciousness happens like clockwork.

In 1944 the American art historian Charles Rufus Morey (1877–1955) published an interesting article on “Mediaeval Art and America.” The piece contains many sentences that make me, as director of this institution, call out to you as specialists for cool assessment of your field and (addressing particularly art historians) your discipline. Midway through the short essay, Morey made a pronouncement about the foundation of Dumbarton Oaks in 1940. He wrote: “The most recent symptom of this trend, showing both the importance given to Byzantine studies in this country, and the position which Washington seems destined to occupy as a centre of art studies, is the opening, preceding by a few months that of the National Gallery, of the library and collection at Dumbarton Oaks, presented to Harvard University by Mr. and Mrs. Bliss. This has been planned from its inception as a centre of research in Early Christian and Byzantine art and in collateral fields, and will undoubtedly prove a weighty factor in swinging the emphasis of
American mediaeval scholarship in that direction. With this new foundation adding its facilities to those of Chicago, Princeton, Vassar, Wellesley and the Byzantine Institute, the stage would seem to be set for the successful prosecution, on this side of the Atlantic, of the spade-work and accumulation of source-material out of which will emerge sometime as the product of American scholarship, a definitive history of Byzantine art.” Are we there yet? Have we changed goals, but are we still progressing toward them?

A block away from here, the physical plant continues to take form. We have a splendid new Fellowship House, where just this week two truly lapidary sentences from Mildred Barnes Bliss in 1942 and 1966 have been inscribed into the formal entrance on R Street: “Whatever can be done—within reason—for living scholarship should be done by Dumbarton Oaks. The distinction of the scholars themselves, as well as of their writings, is as integral a part of humanism at Dumbarton Oaks as are the library and the collection.”

Dumbarton Oaks puts at the disposal of scholars and often of the general public the finest collections within the finest facilities. We have redoubled our efforts over the past decade to increase our holdings and to make them ever more approachable. Our library continues to build its collections in print and electronic resources, and we have added carrels and seating. Our museum is open now six hours rather than three hours every day except Monday. Our Byzantine studies librarian has overseen a manuscript on microfilm database, to enable searching among nearly 2000 microfilm rolls. Our Byzantine seals team, which includes this year alongside our postdoctoral teaching fellow a post-baccalaureate fellow, completed this year digital image capture of seventeen and a half thousand seals, obverse and reverse. Next comes metadata! Our coins collection grew substantially thanks to a major gift. Our textiles collection is pushing toward an online catalogue. The manuscripts in the Byzantine collection are now available. The Athena Ruby Inscription Font has been completed and made freely accessible. The Bliss-Tyler Correspondence has come online. Not everything is finished—when is it ever?—but in these cases we have taken major strides forward.

In all of these endeavors we have not allowed the perfect to become the enemy of the good. Rather than keeping moldering offline for more decades to come the marvelous resources we have, we have labored together to bring them into public view. To achieve that last objective across such a diverse institution requires not seeking to impose a totalitarian solution upon operations that differ both obviously and subtly. Publishing in print is not identical with publishing online. An art museum is not a coin collection or a seals collection, none of them is a library, and a library is not an archive. But museums, coins, and seals are flora, while libraries
and archives are fauna. Woe betide the person who has the temerity and arrogance to impose upon such splendid diversity a one-size-fits-all vision.

Thus far I have not mentioned the Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives (acronymized as I-C-F-A or ICFA). With hallmark eloquence Margaret Mullett will soon speak to the contribution that Shalimar White’s cadre has made to this event. I would like preemptively to applaud them and everyone else I have mentioned, but especially Margaret and Bob in their guise as symposiarchs, and to express the hope that from their studies of the past everyone involved in this event—organizers, speakers, exhibitors, and auditors—will gain the wisdom that humanism at its best offers for compassion and collaboration in the present. The world needs much more of such understanding, if it is to comprehend what remains to us, and to prevent even more from being lost, and there is no better place to begin practicing our comprehension than with each other.