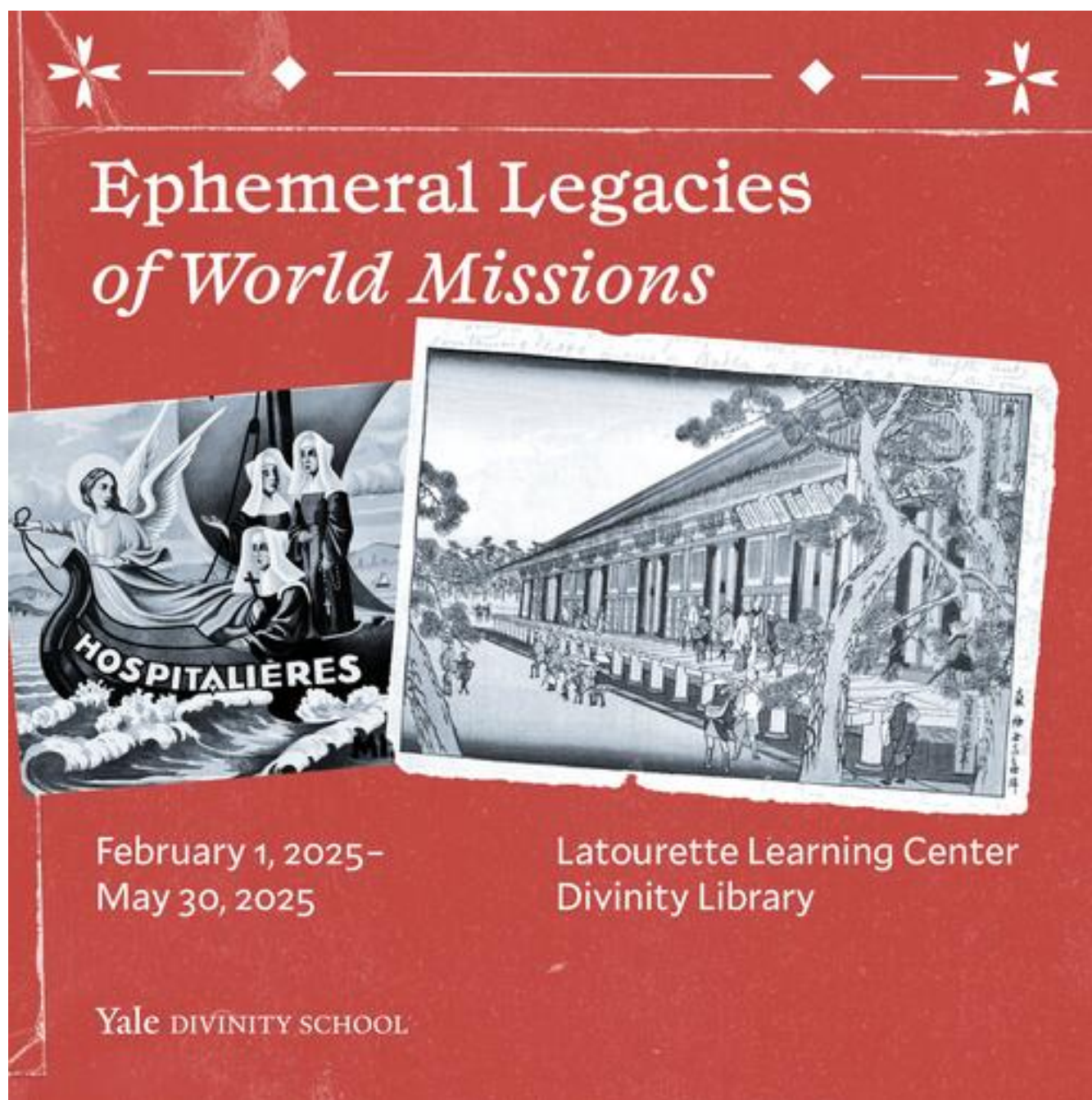


New Exhibit! Ephemeral Legacies of World Missions



January 31, 2025

Ephemeral Legacies of World Missions
Latourette Learning Center
Divinity Library
February 1, 2025-May 30, 2025

Ephemeral often implies irrelevance, possibly even insignificance. Will anyone remember an ephemeral cease-fire or fashion trend? For archivists and historians, though, it is precisely because ephemeral objects are not expected to survive that makes them significant artifacts of certain times and spaces. This exhibit presents ephemera from the Yale Divinity Library collections associated with world missions. Most come from the Missionary Ephemera Collection (Record Group 221).

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World missions brought together people of many different beliefs, backgrounds, and biases. There is no simple way to encapsulate the multitude of encounters, and this exhibit does not attempt to do so. Instead, it takes as its theme the ways that missionary ideas needed to be translated: to people with whom the missionaries worked, to the so-called “home base” that supported missions, and to the missionaries themselves who translated their environs for their own understanding. Most of the materials on view served a purpose for a particular time and place and they held no great value. Their survival owes much to chance, but they still tell a remarkably complicated story.

Throughout Christian history, visual materials like those on display have helped convey meaning. They have been particularly significant, in both positive and negative ways, when language or culture presented obstacles, as was often the case with missionaries. Images could also challenge stereotypes or assumptions. Visuals served the same functions for the home base, which required as much translation and interpretation as the mission field.

Curated by Scott Libson, Special Collections Librarian, Yale Divinity Library.

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