A Time of Reckoning

Telling the Canadian Mennonite University Story

Edited by Paul G. Doerksen

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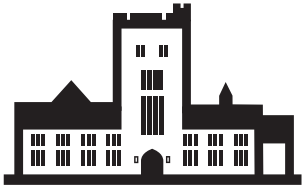

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Telling the CMU Story

Paul G. Doerksen

On October 27–28, 2023, Canadian Mennonite University hosted a symposium titled "A Time of Reckoning: Telling the CMU Story."[1] The symposium began with a chapel worship service, with the most public session being the J.J. Thiessen Lecture delivered by Dr. Willie James Jennings (Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Systematic Theology and Africana Studies, Yale Divinity School), titled "Gathering the Pieces That Remain: Weaving Life Together from the Fragments of Faith, Race, and Land." Other sessions included presentations from faculty members, external voices, and CMU alumni. The latter sessions added an important dimension to the symposium, as we were exposed to the ongoing work and reflection of presenters from Korea, Amsterdam, London, Toronto, and several Manitoba Hutterite colonies. The lively wrap-up of the symposium featured brief reflections from Jennings, along with several faculty members.

The work begun by that symposium carries on in several forms. The presentations were recorded and are available for viewing on the CMU website: **https://www.cmu.ca/about/a-time-of-reckoning**. CMU staff and faculty have since met four times over brown-bag lunches to extend the conversation. In addition, the edited presentations are included in this book, which will be made widely available. Overall, the preparation for, delivery of, and reflection on the symposium have generated what I take to be constructive and edifying conversation. Our president, Cheryl Pauls, in reflecting on all of this, asserts that she "found the symposium to represent the CMU learning community at its best. Presenters spoke effectively from vantage points of personal experience, vocation, and wrestling as they gave voice to the institution's collective reckoning." Please consider this collection of essays an invitation to participate in CMU's extended "Time of Reckoning."

Setting the Stage

1

Four Measures of CMU in 2023

Cheryl Pauls

In 2025, Canadian Mennonite University celebrates its twenty-five-year anniversary, a milestone that's coincident with other relevant markers for the university. Drawing on the notion of musical measures, which carry both quantitative dimensions of periodic recurrence and qualitative dimensions of character, this essay measures the heart and trajectory of CMU through four forms of its story.

Measure One: An Annual Story

It's Advent 2023. I apprehend a thirty-year high in the number of people connecting with the audacious comfort and joy of Advent texts amid a world of much warring and weariness, groaning and grieving. Pews seem a little fuller at Advent services and concerts, a few more homes are decorated with Christmas lights, and words such as "In the coldest, darkest time of the year, all creation cries out for warmth, for light, for news of peace on earth to blaze through the world's harsh crust" are met with nodding affirmation. My observations do not confirm an increase in religious expression by any research standard – yet I invite you to consider personally whether annual Advent themes seem less passé or cliché than in recent years. Did the echoing forth of good tidings of great joy for all creatures – the powerful brought down, the lowly lifted up – resonate with your own yearnings for a story of hope that's sufficient to transform the very conditions of life today? I'm not grasping for veracity in my perceptions; I present them instead to engage sensibilities surrounding CMU today. For I submit that the mission entrusted to CMU relies on a learning community that is compelled by the blessed call of Advent – the grace of God continuously disrupting and restoring all creation.

Measure Two: An Occasion

In October 2023, CMU held a symposium entitled "A Time of Reckoning: Telling the CMU Story," occasioned by a grant from the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) in recognition of the considerable disruption, vulnerability, and soul-searching experienced by many of its member institutions today. The name of the CIC's initiative, "Reframing the Institutional Saga," reflects its purpose: to engage, reckon with, and account for the story of each institution's missional entrustment in relation to its current context and to possibilities for moving

forward. The symposium was a space for reflection within a time of institutional strain, renewal, and fresh development for CMU. With small revisions, here are my opening reflections for that event:[2]

> The term saga evokes stories transmitted orally over long spans of time. With the CIC grant the notion of saga enables institutions to attend to their collective accounts of questions such as Who are we? What are we entrusted to be and do? With what mission were we sent off and what vocation calls us forward today? Why and how do we differ from others?
>
> Stressing not exceptionalism or merely niche dimensions, these questions invite attention to healthy particularity – where we are coming from, how we got to where we are today, and how we will get to where we are going, together. CIC has recognized that many institutions currently are experiencing shaken confidence as they reckon with vital stats of enrolment and finance out of kilter, and with a more daunting set of authorities, priorities, and activities than the institution initially was set up to serve. Such conditions pertain to CMU.
>
> We will listen together for stories that ring true across our accounts and seasoned reflections, seeking to be challenged and changed by what is revealed by common narratives of CMU. The collective saga dimension does not mean unanimity on all factors of activity and priority. Scholarly inquiry and good community require attention to community members' standpoints, dissent, and respect for uncomfortable places. Yet we need a strengthened collective sense of what we share and dissent from. I desire a multivalent yet clear voice, like a river whose flow takes momentum from the diverse streams, schools, and currents within it.
>
> As CMU emerged in 2000, the desire heard most loudly was that the new entity become a real and significant university and keep the faith over time; indeed, CMU was called into being in trust that these criteria would prove contingent dimensions. Terms to assess effective fulfillment of that desire were not put in place, intentionally so, for the call was compelled less by known institutional models than by a vision for CMU to chart a credible course in new or little-known ways. Thus, CMU was sent out with missional resistance to two dominant narratives: namely, that faith-based universities, by definition, are not deemed significant institutions; and that real universities, by definition, drift from the faith. CMU founders did not deny the truths of stories traced elsewhere of university achievement and Christian faithfulness being sacrificed one for the other.[2] Yet, steeped in a five-hundred-year Radical Reformation story of counter-narratives and drawn less to

apologetics than to embodied practices, they sought a path wherein habits of faith and scholarship would be pursued through resonances across the freedoms of both academic discipline and the Spirit's leading.

With desired resistance to glib contrarianism, CMU always has struggled with its categorization. Comprehension of the struggle crystallized for me recently at a theological lecture by a noted comedian, Charlie Demers. He told of turning down a gig when invited as a Christian comedian. He affirmed, "I'm a Christian and I'm a comedian … but not a Christian comedian. Christian comedy is a genre … at best it's banal."[3] By analogy, CMU follows Christ and is a university. Yet often we clench at the phrases "Christian university" and "faith-based university." I respect schools that use those terms to good effect and also dignify those who for theological reasons find the phrases insufficient. "Faith-based" can connote being stuck in an outmoded 1960s struggle of faith opposed to reason. We prefer to approach "faith-based" as a virtue that's named and practised alongside "hope-drawn" and "love-bound." Our mission statement uses the descriptor "innovative Christian," which matters in rather complicated ways. And I often speak of CMU being faith-rooted, moved, transformed, disrupted, rerouted, rerooted … a stream of terms as confusing as sound.

This symposium will be witness to our reckoning with all that and more. We see much of life as being out of balance, possibly more acutely than in recent decades. Calls to live in ways that reorder the world are urgent. To cite only the most obvious, we face crises of climate, colonialism, human capacity for trust across divergence, and ongoing systemic harms. On these matters we see the church at large and so too the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition as complicit.

Thus we reckon with the soul of this place, with broader church and university wrestlings, and with our curricular expression. For the latter, periodic renewal always has merit yet tends to happen most fervently when vital stats require immediate attention.

I commend to you all persons we will hear from these days, voices representing majority and minority standpoints within Canadian Mennonite University and all the name infers.

I found the symposium to represent the CMU learning community at its best. Presenters spoke effectively from vantage points of personal experience, vocation, and wrestling as they gave voice to the institution's collective reckoning. Together they gestured ways forward. The following two long-term periodic measures emerged for me when reflecting on the symposium

presentations. These measures draw on celebrated anniversaries and relevant rhythms of institutional renewal for CMU; I find their articulation enlightening and provocative.

Measure Three: Celebrated Anniversaries of Five Hundred, One Hundred Fifty, and One Hundred Years

2025 will see celebrations marking five hundred years of Anabaptism. Often described through third-way accounts, the Anabaptist movement purports to be neither Protestant nor Catholic, to approach religion as neither coincident with the state nor as personal, privatized interest, and to lean neither left nor right politically. Of late, substantive critique has emerged of self-congratulatory third-way Anabaptist acclamations; the tradition has no special access to what we might view as *the* third way of Jesus. Yet at present, calls for third-way thinking are emerging in many spheres amid considerable dismay and remorse over polarized convictions in church and society. Thus I ask, what might communities steeped in five hundred years of third-way Anabaptist expression contribute to broad-based third-way initiatives today?

I'll offer one third-way approach in response to occasional concerns that CMU isn't sufficiently separate from surrounding culture. Commonly, church-related institutions are named private, as are most matters of faith and spiritual life. Can we imagine faith expression and so too church-based (and other) institutions to be in a third space that's neither private nor public while retaining loyalty to God? Sixteenth-century Anabaptism sought voluntary associations that were neither publicly coercive nor privately interested; it also established a free rather than state church tradition. The aligning of church and indeed all dimensions of religious and spiritual traditions with private interest has been a lingering effect of this Radical Reformation movement; for some privacy connotes faithfulness, for others it means self-protecting exclusionism. CMU resists the private-public binary where possible; the university inhabits a plural status in Manitoba, labelled neither public nor private but with a distinctly non-defined category.[4] I'm persuaded CMU can contribute to a broader understanding of religious expression beyond these binary categories. Indeed, it is not only Anabaptist tradition where desire for third-way spiritual space might arise; expressions of Indigenous spirituality also do not map well onto private versus public definitions. Thus I ask, how might reflection across Indigenous and Anabaptist traditions carve out third-way understandings of spiritual expression that simply yet profoundly participates in all of life within a religiously plural society?

The two years before 2025 marked two more anniversaries that matter to CMU and open further reflective questions. Mennonites began arriving in Canada from Russia in 1874 and 1923, becoming known respectively as Kanadier

and Russländer groups. In Russia they had lived primarily in colony-type communities and had established an elaborate school system. In Canada many dimensions of colony living – and the establishment of many schools – persisted, thanks to largely rural settlements and government permissions to retain considerable autonomy with respect to language, education, military exemption, and religious assembly. Less sectarian over time, Mennonite peoples gradually have integrated into Canadian society and earned the respect of governments for their economic, humanitarian, and cultural contributions. Thus, Mennonite communities have continued to wrestle with remaining God-fearing while pursuing lives and livelihoods within most sectors of society. CMU is a beneficiary of the evolution of Mennonite education institutions into fewer, more substantive entities with higher academic attainment and societal recognition. CMU is also a beneficiary to ongoing questions and concerns about faithful distinctiveness from mainstream culture. One instance of considerable change in persuasion over the decades involves the proportion of youth from Mennonite churches who attend Mennonite educational institutions. To explore the question of why this proportion is declining, I invite reflection on the long story of change from colony-type living to significant integration within society; therein attention needs be paid to how distinctly Mennonite schools are best sustained when their student bodies are variously plural.

Measure Four: A Rhythm of Institutional Renewal

It's common to worry about institutions losing their way at times of considerable change; judgements on initiatives to renew and develop program in light of the times can seem crassly materialist and misguided. I respect the concern yet am persuaded by the loud call we hear from potential students and their influencers, including people of diverse conviction on many matters: "Lead with the practical, with strong attention to livelihoods. Political and religious strains and polarizations aren't against you as much as you think. CMU has plenty of room to attend to all that comprises a holistic, theologically-rooted, liberal arts education as long as students see enough practical life connections."[5]

That call isn't new. A similar call has been pertinent to significant institutional change about every twenty years. Thus, CMU's present renewal initiatives continue a longstanding pattern. Here's a brief sketch of transformations in CMU's education legacy since about 1900; in sum, spiritual and academic depth have persisted across periodic junctures marked by practical merit.

Mennonite education institutions in Canada began for visionary, practical purposes of training teachers and cultivating communities of faith, with Mennonite Collegiate Institute (Gretna, MB, 1889) and Rosthern Junior College (Rosthern, SK, 1904). In the 1920s Mennonites in Canada started more than fifty schools; at the postsecondary level these were Bible schools founded to study God's

Word in community, understand the peace position of Mennonite youth, and provide high school completion[6] – spiritual and practical needs for immigrant communities. Practical too was the schedule of late October to March studies for youth who farmed. (I digress with a wistful 2023 desire: if only they had formed agricultural, land-based programs in the 1920s.)

In the 1940s the Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church denominations created "Higher Bible Schools," establishing two of the colleges that later merged to form CMU. Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) and Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) had common mandates to study the Bible, teach nonresistance, and train leaders, ministers, and teacher for churches and church institutions.[7] In the 1960s the colleges moved from educating primarily clergy and church workers to providing a depth of theological foundation for life, along with deliberately offering non-professional courses to serve students with very diverse vocational interests. At this time the colleges became teaching centres of the University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba, signifying their attainment of university-level programs.

In the 1980s a third college had emerged that would join MBBC and CMBC to form CMU in 2000, Menno Simons College (MSC). Formed by Friends of Higher Education, MSC's creation was marked by extensive inter-Mennonite conversations on future directions in Mennonite postsecondary education in Canada. Reports and minutes of 1983 speak to a desire to sustain the emphases of the existing colleges,[8] adding liberal arts and sciences, adding entrées into a greater vocational range of programs – including social work and education – and creating academic areas related to peacebuilding, development, and conflict resolution (the emergent areas of MSC), and pursuing greater inter-Mennonite cooperation in education.[9] Discernment descriptions evince strong convictions toward pursuing all the above; financial capacity was the primary limiting and hence determining force. As much attention was given to practical outcomes for any student who might enrol in a Mennonite institution as to far-reaching vision for transformative effects of Mennonite-rooted education in society:

> University education prepares people to assume positions of leadership in society … As 1983 begins the world finds itself facing … crises demanding solutions. Will our economies, on the verge of major depressions, survive? Will malnutrition and poverty in the poorer countries be overcome? Can we continue to develop the earth's resources which have provided us unprecedented levels of material prosperity …? At the same time we ask how these questions relate to older questions of human guilt and suffering, to the beauty within men and women, and to our aspirations after goodness and general health. What kind of leaders will provide answers to these questions?[10]

In 2000 numerous further dimensions of the 1980s vision became reality as Canadian Mennonite University was founded, which brought the three colleges together through a public Act of the Province of Manitoba – a fortuitous moment in government and denominational relations. In the 2020s yet further elements of the 1980s discussions are taking shape through major program development initiatives; at this time we also face greater urgency in the questions that ended Measure Three than was anticipated forty years ago. Along the way, the university continues to educate in the call of a story of hope sufficient to transform the very conditions of life today.

I trust these measures of the mission entrusted to Canadian Mennonite University will continue to move and shape the stories told and experienced by the CMU learning community.

Cheryl Pauls became Canadian Mennonite University's second president in November 2012. Cheryl came to the role from the Music department at CMU, where she taught piano and music theory and took a keen interest in the interface of artistic and liturgical expression. She credits many living composers with shaping her inclinations toward music with no set template for how it goes, inclinations that sustain her administrative work as president.

2

The Place of Worship in the Christian University

(or, the Christian University as a Place of Worship)

Paul Dyck

What is the place of worship in a university? For mainstream culture in Canada, the answer is that it has little place, and certainly little formal place. In my own experience of the large public university – the University of Alberta – the place of worship in the university was largely fugitive. There was no place for worship, except in small student groups who would book a classroom at lunch, say, to meet and sing and pray. I had a strange sense of dislocation on those occasions when we'd be praying in the same room in which I also had a class: the activities of worship and the activities of academics felt not only different but in some way mutually exclusive.

I start here because while it may seem a given that there is a place for worship in a Christian university, we need to acknowledge just how deeply strange a combination this seems to the university world in general.

In my undergraduate experience of Christian groups on campus, these groups could take various characters. There were the zealous Christians who, by their own account, were using the situation of the university to evangelize, reaching people for Jesus. This could go two ways. Some were popular and impressive people with a plan and a high level of certainty about methods and goals. In my first year of university I had more contact with these folks. Later, I found myself more in the company of misfits, people who were equally devoted to the Lord but who lacked social capital and a master plan for growing the kingdom. While I found it disconcerting to be part of this group (I reassured myself that I was a misfit by choice), I found myself much more at home with the misfits than with the high-achieving types. If there is something inherently foolish about the gospel, then why hide it?

But what both achievers and misfits tended toward was an either-or way of seeing university and gospel. I genuinely loved university and I genuinely loved Jesus, and I could express both in the same room, but not at the same time, with the same people. Or, to put it in a more nuanced way, there was a profound division between the act of study, of academic work on the one side, and the act of worship on the other. And if you were going to cross that line, you needed

to be careful about it, particularly if you were going to make any testimony of worship life in the academic setting.

Besides these student meetings, there were two places of worship in my undergrad experience. One was the chapel at the Roman Catholic college on campus. I never did attend a service there, but the chapel was a quiet and beautiful little place of refuge for me, a place set apart for prayer and welcoming to the stranger. And the other place was in the Plains Cree (Nêhiyawêwin) language class I took with Emily Hunter in the late 1980s. Emily would begin each class with prayer in Cree, transforming the classroom from a secular space to a sacred one. Like most Elders I've met, Emily was a down-to-earth and kind person who embodied her spiritual practices in an everyday way. Her calm presence carried an authority that – uniquely in my experience – could gently turn the dominant order on its head. I didn't even think about it at the time – it was just right.

Another crucial person for me in those years was my pastor, Neil McLean, who passed away recently. He was a singular man, the son of a violently abusive father, who was saved from such a life by the love of Jesus. Neil was an Alliance church pastor, but an unusual one. Neil loved the university and passionately loved learning. He introduced me to the theologian Karl Barth, and his office at church was jammed with books – on shelves lining the room, on seemingly everything. One key idea I got from Neil was that there was not a division between the sacred and the secular – at least not the division broadly assumed by church and university. The learning of the university did not need to be, was not rightly kept separate from, the sacred space of the church. I not only could but should do both.

Neil's vision is not satisfied with a neutral, secular account of the university, a university that forms a backdrop, an occasion for evangelism, and for that matter, it's not satisfied with that account of the world either. And this makes our question bigger, because instead of asking merely whether there is a place for worship at the university, we need also to ask whether there a place for theology at the university, a place to take Christian thinking seriously. Not merely coincidentally, both worship and theology have functionally been banished from the dominant Canadian university scene. Or if not banished, then driven to the edges, and existing in other guises.

But following Neil's lead, I followed my heart in my graduate studies, working with literary texts that draw deeply on theological resources. My only regret about that is that I didn't push things further. I was too afraid of critical theory, too much assuming that the thoughtfulness of the university did not have room for theology. One of the great and sustaining things about Canadian Mennonite University for me was that when I came here I found really thoughtful people

with whom I could more confidently explore. Harry Huebner was especially important in my early years here as someone who thought theologically and philosophically at the same time.

Harry would say strange things, like "theology is a grammar." And it is this idea, this point, that is most key to understanding what worship has to do with university. I chose Psalm 148 to be read in chapel this morning because it is the strangest possible way for us to speak, and by way of us speaking it, we enter into the grammar of worship. It includes the following call:

> [7] Praise the LORD from the earth,
> you sea monsters and all deeps,
> [8] fire and hail, snow and frost,
> stormy wind fulfilling his command!
>
> [9] Mountains and all hills,
> fruit trees and all cedars!
> [10] Wild animals and all cattle,
> creeping things and flying birds! (NRSV)

Paradoxically, as we with the psalmist directly address the world around us, a world we commonly take to be inanimate stuff, the psalm both places us in a central position and requires that we give up a position of mastery: we surrender a position of detached knowing about the world and take up our relationship with the world around us, with the other creatures.

The worst irony of our current situation is that we reflexively understand worship to be exclusive: that if we worship in any traditional way, we will be excluding others. We broadly assume that the secular is universal and peaceful, the religious sectarian and violent. Under these terms, the only way for us to do the Christian thing of welcoming the neighbour is to not do Christian worship. As if the way to be Christian is to stop being Christian.

Worship can definitely be exclusive. It gets exclusive when it starts to feel like we are worshipping in our house, our chapel. As an Anglican I am chagrined when I visit London's Westminster Abbey and officials shoo out all the tourists at service time. While travelling once, I went there for evening prayer and fought my way through a crowd outside to tell the security guard that I was there for the service. As he let me through, a woman in the crowd cried out to me, "What did you say? What did you say?" (As a good Anglican, I just turned and kept walking.) Hundreds of people outside, fifteen in. On the same trip, I visited Sacré-*Coeur* Basilica on Montmartre in Paris, this time as a tourist. There was a constant flow of tourists inside the church, a kind of parade around the periphery of the building. And in the centre a priest was conducting a mass, with a really good sound system. The tourists were collectively noisy but individually quiet, and

there was no barrier between the tourists and those who were gathered in the centre for worship. The place was radically open, with the heart of its liturgical action alive and well at its centre, not merely coexisting with secular tourism but reorienting that individualistic secular activity as a collective pilgrimage, not making any demands on the guest other than asking for quiet and being open to the guest's desire. Something has brought the guest here, and we can either play judge on that desire and determine it venal, superficial, non-spiritual; or we recognize it as the same desire we share, as flawed and mixed as that is. We need to ask for ourselves in this story what Sacré-Coeur is willing to compromise and not to compromise, and what Westminster Abbey is not willing to compromise and is willing to compromise. I won't walk through all that, but I will say that the Sacré-Coeur situation can only possibly happen because of an overflowing apprehension of worship as an event, at the heart of which is the presence of God. The rabble at the edge belongs and can only belong because God loves that rabble, and the priest at the visible centre is also there as a guest in the house of God.

The two services were equally traditional, equally liturgical. One was shaped by a liberal Protestantism that has largely accepted secular reasoning, and the other by a Catholicism that seems utterly foolish in the eyes of the world. I describe the two not, though, to make particular judgements of their leadership or as models of how to do things, but rather as emblems that might inform and configure our thinking about the CMU chapel program.

I've experienced more welcoming and less welcoming worship services, and the difference has little to do with how welcoming the people are trying to be. What seems to matter most is whether there is a groundedness in their tradition, and most crucially, a living sense that their worship plays host to God. A vivid sense of the latter and a basic confidence in the former reorients us to the gawker, the curious, the wounded, the sin-sick soul. The Sacré-Coeur pattern gets us thinking about boundaries and centre. It is not an unbounded space but a space with open entry, and the openness of the entry is proportional to the groundedness of the centre.

King's College Chapel in Halifax one of the best chapel programs in the country. Highly traditional in form, especially with its attention to church festivals, and highly sympathetic and responsive in attitude, it is not merely open to the newcomer but entirely oriented toward the newcomer. No outsiders, but rather a bunch of students doing something together.

In this way, the university chapel is rightly evangelical, inviting students into a tradition without primary concern for what exactly they believe. In this way the university chapel may be very different from some of our students' churches and communities, some of which have hard boundaries, which Anabaptist communities tend to have. My point is not at all that those hard boundaries are

wrong – without such boundaries, for instance, the Hutterites wouldn't exist, and we'd all be the worse for it. Rather, my point is that the CMU chapel as a university chapel should work more like Sacré-Coeur or King's College: at its heart Mennonite Christian worship, to which all are invited.

As the student body becomes less churched, this educational and participatory sensibility grows all the more important. Chapel has always been a place where students could practise worship, but it needs to be a place aimed at inviting students to try out worship. To this end, chapel at CMU strikes a balance between groundedness and experimentation, something we presently accommodate in our Tuesday/Friday structure, with Tuesdays being a quiet, meditative chapel that is highly predictable and thus reliable – a spiritual refuge – and Fridays being open to the unpredictable, the new.

Worship is strange, and we are both attracted to it and afraid of it. It's embarrassing to be caught talking to God, especially at a university. But this is a problem at our big public universities, for these institutions gather people while denying the personal and collective spiritual life of those people.[1] A phobia of religion pervades the universities, even as the universities are hollowed out and remade as skills-training instruments, reduced to capitalist production lines. We today have no patience for the university as a place of wisdom, where young people can grow roots in the traditions passed down through generations. We instead idealize rootlessness in the form of transferable skills, in a world where everything is interchangeable. The universities as currently desired carry on as if religion is the problem and thus cannot see that their solutions to problems such as climate change and economic crisis are and can only be further manifestations of those problems, fighting fire with fire.

The university chapel exists to be an alternative space for an alternative fire. The chapel is a place that bears witness to an entirely different order of things than that which we think we see around us, an order in which it makes sense for us to speak to the fire and hail, the snow and frost, the stormy wind, calling out to them to praise the Lord, even as they fulfill the Lord's commands. It is a place that takes in all that we do here, the whole of the curriculum and all our tasks, and reorients them and transforms them into worship. We meet here as pilgrims on a journey, sparked by longing.

Paul Dyck is professor of English at Canadian Mennonite University, where he has taught since its founding in 2000, and a lay preacher at Saint Margaret's Anglican Church. He teaches literature from Homer to Tomson Highway and has published primarily on the poetry of George Herbert.

Embodying the CMU Project

3

Telling Our Stories Well

Karl Koop

If we were to embark on a walking tour along the banks of the Limmat River in Zürich, Switzerland, we might eventually come upon a bronze plaque recalling the execution of Anabaptists. The plaque, bearing the names of Felix Manz, Hans Landis, and others is a reminder of some 2,500 Anabaptists who were executed for their faith convictions in the sixteenth century.[1] The plaque might also jog our memories of other instances of victimization, prompting us to remember the several thousand Mennonites in eastern Europe, who in the first half of the twentieth century fell victim to war, starvation, displacement, rape, and systematic executions. Such reminders are important for those of us who identify in some way with being Anabaptist or Mennonite. Collective memories that connect us to our faith traditions ground us and keep us from drifting self-referentially and from being consumed by our individual subjectivities. Memories of this kind are critical if we wish to understand who we are, and if we aspire to speak meaningfully and authentically to the questions of our time. And yet, as James Urry has noted, memorials of suffering and victimhood can easily fall prey to habits of "remembering selectively and forgetting strategically."[2] We cannot simply rest nostalgically, sentimentally, or even thoughtfully with these memories without paying attention to the errors of the past.

Many of us are in positions of privilege, and while we may be tempted to believe that our status has come about as a result of hard work and wise choices, we ought to consider that we are also beneficiaries of centuries of colonialism that have brought us to where we are today. Our past is not without its dark side. Perhaps especially in an era of commemorations, we should not forget instances of historical wrongdoing and moral failure. Here I am not only thinking in a narrow sense of the ways in which we as Mennonites have participated in the colonial project. I am also calling to mind the ways in which we have not adequately confronted violence, power, and abuse in our communities even as we have claimed to be a peace church.[3] "There are no innocent traditions," and ours is no exception.[4]

The requirement to address historical wrongdoing is not unique to Mennonites, nor is it something that has appeared on the horizon only of late. Hans Werner has helpfully drawn attention to German collective memory during and after the Nazi period. Academic and popular discussion in Germany has been devoted to what has come to be referred to as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, that

is, "the process of coming to terms with the past."[5] Scholars have pointed to the era of silence that followed the war, and have noted how events such as the 1968 student protests influenced the way in which that generation processed memories, and how it eventually came to see its parents as bystanders and participants in the atrocities committed during the Nazi period.[6]

In the Canadian context, a different kind of reckoning has been underway as settler communities consider ways in which their past actions have had harmful effects on First Nations peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was created to address historical wrongs committed by the federal government and church bodies, and has become a reminder of land taken away from Indigenous peoples. In responding, Mennonites have begun to slowly realize that there is no genuine reconciliation without restorative justice, and that reparations are an important dimension of discipleship and of being a part of a peace church.

To be sure, it is critical that we include stories that inspire or highlight the difficult periods of our past. Such exercises not only ground and orient us, they also may affect how we relate to others. Elaine Enns recalls the Russian Revolution and Civil War (1917–21), the context in which her grandparents and others "endured a continuous climate of violence, plundering, rape, and killing." She observes that her grandparents never talked about these experiences. They "spoke only about the good times and the vast abundance and beauty of the land."[7] This narrative was upended, however, when in her senior year in high school, Enns became acquainted with Barbara Claassen Smucker's novel *Days of Terror* and the concept of *Zerrissenheit*, a time of being torn apart.[8] She states that through this encounter, she realized how important it was to remember her grandparents' difficult experiences.

Central to Enns's interest in the act of remembering is the problem of intergenerational trauma and how it can affect several generations, who often exhibit "significantly higher than normal levels of, for example, anxiety, depression, phobias, obsessions, compulsions, and excessive paranoia."[9] In her view, while trauma studies may thus underwrite victimhood narratives, they might also point to why Mennonite communities, now often privileged in North America, may have trouble seeing and responding to the pain of others and taking responsibility for wrongs that have been committed in the past.[10]

So the act of remembering that includes the trauma experienced by one's own tradition has its place. But for Mennonites today – individually and collectively – such remembering is not enough. Historical wrongs also need to be addressed in such a way that standard narratives are not simply rehearsed but critically assessed, and if necessary refigured anew, articulated afresh so that memorials and commemorations may become occasions for embodying a transformed way of knowing and seeing the world.

Here I find Sunder John Boopalan's perspectives helpful and worthy of further reflection. In his publication *Memory, Grief, and Agency: A Political Theological Account of Wrongs and Rites*,[11] Boopalan focuses on racism and casteism and the ways in which Dalit communities in India and elsewhere have been historically discriminated against and often cruelly treated as outcasts. This subject area seems far removed from the world of Anabaptism, and yet Boopalan's work is relevant to Anabaptists, particularly in the way that he works with fecund notions of memory and grief that can lead to constructive agential possibilities. A few selections from his work illustrate this.

At the outset, Boopalan notes that not everyone thinks that remembering historical wrongs and grieving about them is a good idea. There are religious thinkers, such as Oliver O'Donovan, who believe that memory, especially the kind that seeks earthly redress, is above all God's prerogative. Those who seek redress usurp God's proper place and falsely take on responsibilities that can only be a part of God's concern and purview.[12] Miroslav Volf, likewise, prefers an end to remembering wrongs such as atrocities committed in a time of war, because in allowing memory to linger there is always the danger that victims of past wrongs will become vengeful, that the oppressed will become oppressors and further violence will ensue.[13] Volf maintains that there must be an end to memory to stop the rage and the possibility of the oppressed becoming oppressors – an observation also shared by O'Donovan.[14]

Boopalan disagrees. Memory of a certain kind is critical, he believes, because if we avoid it, we underestimate the degree to which structural wrongs – often culturally, religiously, and legally sanctioned – continue to have an influence on the present. Structural wrongs of the past often persist and socially condition the habits of present generations, sometimes leading to further wrongs, ever more brutal and explosive. Remembering past wrongs, therefore, is critical in helping victims and survivors to see how present acts of violence are connected to the past.[15]

This kind of remembering is not only important for those who have been victimized. Boopalan notes that it is critical that members from historically privileged social locations also learn to remember past wrongs that have been committed. In paying attention to these wrongs, those who have been complicit in systems of violence can come to understand the ways in which, as watchers and bystanders, they too have participated in cultures of oppression. Such understanding can lead to acts of solidarity with victims and survivors, moving beyond simply a dispassionate acquiring or dispensing of knowledge and transitioning toward concrete action.[16]

In discussing the importance of action, Boopalan invokes the language of grief but not in the sense of self-enclosed melancholy. Grief must be outwardly

oriented such that singular and collective identities are repositioned toward that which is positively agential. Grief leads to ethical action in which persons from dominant social locations find themselves drawn into the worlds of the oppressed. Bodies are moved from their own privileged spaces and attitudes to places where they can be in solidarity with those who suffer wrongs.[17] In the end, grief *moves* persons, not in an episodic way but in an ongoing fashion that even shapes the life of the church. New rituals are established, while liturgies and sacraments are transformed.[18] The basis of this transformative experience is grounded in the Exodus, where God is seen as being on the side of the oppressed. It is also rooted in the Incarnation, where God in Christ "chooses to side with those who are oppressed and suffering wrongs."[19]

In brief, Sunder John Boopalan's vision is about telling stories well. On the one hand, he is critical of the way in which religions and cultures can easily be complicit in violent situations; on the other hand, he posits a *liberative* theological imagination that is hope-filled.[20] He insists on a pathway that pays attention to memory, grief, solidarity, and the transforming of rituals, that embodies a way of knowing and seeing the world in a truthful manner leading to liberation for all.

My sense is that this does not mean avoiding memorials or commemorations that pay attention to stories of victimization and trauma. Good storytelling – regardless of the origins of the faith tradition, European or otherwise – includes a self-reflective coming to terms with those who died as victims of tyranny. And yet, such storytelling can never be simply hagiographical. Good narration requires a retelling that incorporates the ambiguities of history and instantiations of failure and wrongdoing. While this form of storytelling may cause discomfort, such expression is a necessary pathway for grounding, orienting, and transforming communities toward a future with hope.

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4

Pacifying My Reformational World View

Ray Vander Zaag

When I was invited to participate in the "Time of Reckoning" symposium, it was suggested that I might give my sense of Canadian Mennonite University (or of CMU's educational story as a Christian university) from a Reformed perspective. As I have always thought of, and often shared about, my work here at CMU as coming from that Reformed perspective, I'm happy to try to do that here.

I will cover three broad points: first, some very basic Reformed theological foundations and how they shape my understanding of the task of a Christian university; second, a quick review of current challenges of teaching and scholarship in international development studies (IDS); and third, how my Reformed perspective has been reshaped (perhaps even "pacified," as I suggest in the title I've chosen) by the Anabaptist ethos and mission of CMU.

I start with some Reformed theological foundations, since the Reformational tradition holds that one's theological starting points orient all of life, including theoretical thought, and thus also have key implications for university teaching and learning. This is my own (perhaps idiosyncratic) summary based on my reading and experience in this tradition, not on a scholarly or systematic summary. And I will be quite brief, simply declaring these foundations and implications without developing them in any detail.

The bedrock of Reformed theology is the emphasis on the sovereignty of God over all creation and all of life, including our academic life. The good news of the gospel starts in Genesis, when God created all things good and set humans in a garden to tend and steward creation.

After creation comes free will and the fall, and thus my favourite Reformed doctrine – total depravity. Total depravity does *not* mean that humans are totally evil but rather that every human action is mixed with sin, fallenness, and evil. The fall is radical; there is no unaffected part of humanity – particularly (for our interests today) that of our minds, our rationality, our reason – that is not fallen. Thus Reformed people should be inclined to take a critical approach to scholarship, to any absolute human claims to truth.

Coming out of these emphases on the sovereignty of God over all creation and

the radical nature of the fall is the idea of antithesis – in all areas of life, as humans we are either seeking, trusting, and serving God and God's purposes, or those of some other god (or "idol," to put it strongly).

The above ideas are often summarized with a quote from Abraham Kuyper: "No single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry MINE."[1] And so for scholarship, this means that all fields of inquiry, from mathematics to biology to sociology and economics and psychology, should be studied and explored to discover (or re-discover) creation's potential and God's good intentions (God's good "meaning-order") for each aspect of our existence.

Out of this comes a number of related beliefs. Another key distinctive of Reformational thought is the concept of sphere sovereignty, which, affirming the goodness of the creational diversity of life, emphasizes that each sector of life has its own good purpose and institutions, and each has its own distinctive sphere of responsibility and competence.

The rather epistemologically pessimistic implications of the doctrine of total depravity is offset, at least somewhat, by a theology of common grace. While humans can do little good on their own, God's common grace toward *both* those who trust God *and* those who do not allows good to be done, trustworthy knowledge to be created, fruitful and beautiful things to be produced, and loving relationships to be formed by all people. The grace of God, acknowledged or not, rains down on all. Rationality and empathy are good gifts that do lead humans (whether they acknowledge God or not) to good knowledge and action in many areas of life.

Finally, there is the idea of world view – all humans thus have a "world and life view" – consisting of basic pre-theoretical beliefs and commitments about the world, about humanity, about suffering and evil and how to resolve these. Jamie K.A. Smith has emphasized how these are not just cognitive beliefs but "loves."[2] To adopt current constructionist language, we might say these are our "narrative identities" or "story worlds."

From my Reformational perspective, it is important to acknowledge and articulate these theological assumptions, since they tend to be under-theorized by many faculty at church-affiliated universities, particularly those from traditions that put greater accent on discipleship and ethics instead of systematic (philosophical) reflection.

As will have been evident in the preceding paragraphs, I am not a formally trained theologian or philosopher but rather a student of international development. How have these philosophical and theological ideas shaped my

approach to teaching and researching international development, and what I think CMU distinctively can bring to this task?

As was pointed out in the self-study of the IDS program that was recently presented to CMU Senate, the field of IDS is currently fraught and contradictory. On the one hand, the development enterprise has helped hundreds of millions of people escape absolute poverty and has greatly reduced levels of disease and poor living conditions. Yet hundreds of millions of people remain in poverty, and inequality is rising in many regions. And the costs of this development are also increasingly apparent in the destruction of environments and climates, the loss of cultures and languages, and the widespread adoption of consumeristic lifestyles that only contribute in contradictory ways to genuine human flourishing. Development, proceeding from the dominant materialist, rational-secular world view of the West, has, for better *and* worse, and admittedly with certain significant resistances, colonized the entire world.

As I say to my students, development has been the dominant "secular missionary movement of the West" for the past seventy years. For at least five decades after the end of World War II, many thousands of Western development workers have gone out to the developing world to bring development – I was one of them in the 1980s. Yet increasingly, well-trained development workers from the Global South are taking leadership of the development of their own countries. And increasingly, Canadian students are asking if they have the moral right to go to poor countries in, say, Africa, when we have so many issues related to Indigenous reconciliation, environmental sustainability, and social justice here in Canada. Talk of decolonizing development is everywhere.

So the question is, how should we at CMU prepare students for such a contradictory enterprise?

As I have argued in my chapter in Gerald Gerbrandt's Festschrift,[3] we need to stop understanding underdevelopment in terms of deficits in southern countries – the deficit of material things (money, food, machines), the deficit of adequate (Western, rationalist/objectivistic) knowledges, or even deficits in (political) power. Overcoming deficits of money, knowledge, or power has been how development has been understood, both historically and still often today: the rich, the knowledgeable, the powerful helping the poor, the simple, the weak and marginalized. Our students do not need to become these kinds of developers. Rather, our students need to be converted or transformed – from a confident, rationalist world view to identities of service and knowing how to enter into relationships of reciprocity. Development involves co-learning with those who have been historically marginalized; it should be seen as a "participatory learning process" that discovers better ways of living in diverse lands and among different cultures and peoples.[4]

Which of course is easy and nice for me to say here. But how can this transformation be made to happen?

I started by describing the distinctive world and life view instilled in me by my Reformed roots. Anyone who knows a bit about the story of those who have followed this Reformational world view, confident that they were bringing the creation-order of God to all spheres of life, knows that they have tended to be among the more arrogant and self-assured people – in a humble way, of course (and thus not unlike Mennonites!). Despite their success in institution building and knowledge production in many areas of life, their confidence that God is "on their side" has frequently repelled and hurt as much as it has attracted and convinced. When I arrived in Haiti in the mid-1980s, fresh with a degree in agriculture to work with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (my denomination's relief and development agency) in a rural development program, I certainly thought we knew the development answers to Haiti's rural poverty. Working in Haiti was a chastening experience, full of learning.

And so here I want to come to my third point, to which I've alluded in my title – the pacifying of my Reformational roots.

The Reformed emphasis on how we all proceed in all our living and thinking, in our ethical choices and abstract theorizing from particular world views, raises the critical question of how we can act with authority in the world. The Reformational position, with its strong emphasis on the antithesis between God-serving and self-serving ways of acting and knowing, makes a strong claim to be the "truth." The conviction that Christians (and Christian universities) are called to discover God's intentions and "laws" in all areas of life often leads to claims of power, claims of divine authority. The modernist alternative, the secular-rationalist world view, with its commitment to and trust in human rationality and the resulting "true" laws of science and economics and other forms of (Western) knowledge, has made powerful counter-claims to being neutral and true. Both approaches, then, have brought with them the inherent danger of violence – epistemic violence leading to structural and everyday forms of violence.

Over the past fifty years, postmodernist approaches have exposed the partial perspectives of these approaches and have emphasized the socially constructed nature of truth – the limits of its rationality, its whiteness, its maleness, its Eurocentricity. Any claim to absolute truth oppresses, and those social groups that have historically been oppressed are those who have claims to social justice.

What I have learned and most appreciated during my time at CMU is the core Anabaptist commitment to peace, and the insistence that the claims of God in Christ, the truths of God, are never violent but always offered in peace. The truth claims of Christianity are never to be imposed, are only ever to be offered

in love. So while I still strongly believe that God calls CMU to be a Christian university, to discover and learn and teach the truths of God's creational design in every area of life, and to call humanity to obey those truths, our proclamation and witness is always tempered by the example of a self-sacrificing God. This has been the pacification of what I now see has often been a too-self-assured and confident Reformed world and life view.

So what is the unique task of CMU as an Anabaptist Christian university? I want to end by bringing in a final Reformed idea, and if I can say this, Anabaptizing it. This is the idea, summarized by Reformed philosophers such as Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, that a Christian epistemology should be understood as "faith seeking understanding."[5] The order is important – it is "faith seeking understanding" and not "understanding seeking faith," or "faith added to understanding." Both of these latter two formulations prioritize the autonomy and priority of rational thinking. I am arguing that our deepest "heart" commitments come first, and shape our efforts at understanding, at finding the truth. As scholars and professors in a Christian university, our understanding, our thinking (and our feeling and acting, I would argue) is never neutral or autonomous but always built on religious-deep commitments and loves. And that primarily, love should be the love of God in Christ, a love that is never violent but is willing to lay down its own life in order to save.

And so the "CMU project" should continue to seek and share, and yes, even proclaim God's truth, which is God's love, offered in service, offered peaceably. If CMU remains committed to the truths of Christ's sacrificial love for the world, then CMU can continue to seek and share new and better understandings of the world. Then it will have a firm foundation for working for peace, for social justice, for reconciliation.

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5

Are You Alone Wise?

Paul G. Doerksen

In September 2003, nearly a decade before I joined the Canadian Mennonite University faculty as a member of the Biblical and Theological Studies (BTS) department, Stanley Hauerwas came to our campus to deliver a sermon titled "On Milk and Jesus," on the occasion of the installation of Gerald Gerbrandt as CMU's president. The "milk" of the title refers to a word carved in granite on the front of a building on the Iowa State University campus. Hauerwas speculated on how the knowledges of that university would be formed if they were organized around milk. As is often the case with Hauerwas, what might appear to be a joke was deadly serious (the opposite is also true of Hauerwas).[1] He then turned his attention to CMU, articulating his hope that Jesus might be central to our formation of knowledges; Jesus, not pacifism, mind you. Along with this vision for CMU, Hauerwas offered a series of warnings, claiming that we would have our work cut out for us, primarily because we would "be tempted to be just another university with a Mennonite difference" rather than recognizing that our difference should necessarily go all the way down.[2] He suggested that our task was not to meet some external standards of what it means to be a university. "Your task is to be what you must be if you are to be faithful to your history as Canadians and Mennonites."[3] He pressed further, pointing out that we have a lot going for us, primarily that we are poor, and therefore need the ongoing support of Christian people. "The future and faithfulness of CMU will not be determined by administration or the faculty of the university. They will make a difference, but the difference they make will only be possible if a church exists that wants that difference made,"[4] a point to which I will return.

I want to pick up on some of Hauerwas's claims and cautions, especially regarding the role of a BTS department in a university in which Jesus is central to our formation of knowledges. Surely a department such as BTS by its very nature and makeup must be central to that theological vision – or so we are quick to say. One of the ways we have sought to express the centrality of the department is through requiring students to enrol in a significant number of BTS courses as part of every degree we grant. Indeed, it has been tempting to believe that demanding participation in our courses is in fact what makes BTS central to carrying the theological vision of CMU. If we buy this notion, then of course we react with alarm when the number of required BTS courses is reduced in any significant way. But here the direct correlation of the number of required BTS credit hours

with the centrality of Jesus needs to be challenged. If Hauerwas was right in saying that "the future and faithfulness of CMU will not be determined by the administration or the faculty of the university,"[5] then the BTS department does *not* bear the full weight of keeping Jesus central to the formation of knowledges. It does not because it cannot – an assertion that answers the question in the title of my talk, namely, are you alone wise? This question is, of course, one that gained considerable currency during the Reformation, especially in the struggles between Martin Luther and his theological opponents. Luther's rejection of the authority of the pope and of church tradition in order to rely on his notion of scriptural authority resulted in his own words being turned against him. "Luther rejected the power and weight of tradition by asking himself the question that would become a famous accusation: 'The Thomistic asses have nothing to bring forward except a multitude of men and ancient usage; that then when someone presents the Scriptures they say, "You are the most foolish of all men; are you alone wise?"'"[6] That final question was taken up by Luther's opponents and turned on him: "Did Luther really believe that he alone was correct? Was he wiser than Thomas and Bonaventure? Could the pope and the universal church err but not Luther? Was it possible that Luther alone was wise?"[7] Thus the incredulous questions of his opponents.

Here I want to turn this question toward my own department – are we the only ones charged with and capable of making Jesus central to our formation of knowledges? As was the case with Martin Luther, and as I've already argued, the obvious response is negative. The theological vision of our university, the work of making and keeping Jesus central to that vision cannot be accomplished via course requirements or size of department alone. There is no magic number of BTS courses or faculty members to which we can point as evidence for our ongoing faithfulness – or unfaithfulness, for that matter.

Put another way: the legitimate centrality of theology for our Christian university is lodged not in one department but is meant to be carried in a decentralized way, decentralized but not dissipated; is meant to shape all our efforts, no matter what the disciplines in which we do our primary work. The faithful theological shaping of our disciplines remains a task in perpetuity, not least for the BTS department; after all, it's hard to keep theology theological.[8] Theology is not theological by remaining in splendid isolation. In Rowan Williams's description of these matters, he asserts that "theology is bound to be an anthropology – and if it is, it is immediately bound up with other anthropologies, discussing, affirming, contesting and, so theology would claim, always enlarging. What theology constantly looks to is a way of characterizing what is human that makes it clear that there is no adequate 'humanism' without reference to God, and more specifically, to the Second Adam."[9]

I want to return to my department, acknowledging that we alone are not wise regarding theological vision and course content. Assuming that's the case, I now want to argue that biblical and theological scholars who write, teach, and serve play an essential role in a Christian university; essential but not domineering. This role, as I understand it, includes the cultivation of awareness and practices that seek to address the insidious temptations that haunt theological education, temptations such as idolatry, self-reliance, possessiveness, the propensity to dominate – this list could go on. In light of these temptations, one of the most significant stances that theological educators need to take is that of penitence and humility, seeking to understand where our own theological work acts in ways that produce distortion and lead to death.[10] Such a stance presses us to teach and write and serve in ways that are *not* designed to stake out territory, protect turf, or claim authority as some kind of deserved possession.

What might a BTS department that cultivates a dispossessive stance look like? A department that does not seek to dominate, or lay claim to being centrally important? Of course, the answers to such questions cannot be answered fully in the abstract, nor can they be answered definitively or even primarily by using numbers, slavishly applying formulas related only to cost and demand. Nonetheless, the work done by faithful biblical and theological faculty makes a difference, or at least it ought to. Put another way, the necessary decentralization of theological vision, the dispossessiveness of an appropriately humble and perpetually penitent BTS department should not translate into some notion that such scholars, such a department is not *necessary* in a Christian university, that the theological vision of the university can be carried *without* a robust, engaged, and influential BTS faculty.

Roman Catholic theologian Gerald O'Collins defines a theologian as "someone who watches their language in the presence of God, a definition from which we can infer a process of constant discernment and possible and necessary change."[11] And, I would argue, it's not only we theologians who should watch our language in the presence of God; to do so is a call that cuts across all disciplines. After all, if we believe that the entire created world is the arena of God's work, then all our knowledges take God's world in its many dimensions with utter seriousness.[12]

A Christian university in which Jesus is central to the formation of our knowledges needs a theological vision, the carrying forward of which needs BTS faculty, but it cannot be borne only there – that vision is carried within all our disciplines, and even more widely by administration and other members of the university community. Carrying this vision will make a difference that goes all the way down, but here we need to remind ourselves that such a difference will only be possible if a church exists that wants that difference made.[13] If

a Christian university is how churches take responsibility for the process of education in ways that knowledge, wonder, love, and service are united,[14] then the role of the BTS department is not to be alone wise, or to be wise in the ways of the world, but to serve the church in the world by giving itself in service to the One who is central to the formation of all of our knowledges – to Jesus Christ our Lord.

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6

CMU and Me

Journeying Toward Intercultural Health

Jodi Dueck-Read

My evolving relationship with Canadian Mennonite University began in 2010, when I first taught as a sessional at both CMU's main campus and Menno Simons College (MSC). I had arrived in Winnipeg (and Canada) a year prior to begin graduate studies in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. And while I had fourteen years of experience working with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Bolivia, Chile, and the United States, and attended a Mennonite church, I had also recently begun to identify as queer, marking my arrival at CMU.

My queer entrée to CMU and the unfolding relationship with the institution and its approach to embracing difference is the content of this chapter. CMU needs to enhance and promote the participation of diverse peoples in shaping the CMU community. In striving to create intercultural health, or an environment where people of many social identities determine CMU's habitat,[1] we will continue on a path toward peace-justice. On this journey, we may need to recognize our dislike of disagreement and discomfort with inconformity, characteristics that seem to sustain the white, Mennonite, and heteronormative CMU environment.

In this piece, I contend that CMU needs to advance the multifold participation of historically marginalized communities in shaping CMU culture in significant ways. To begin, I examine my relationship with CMU, laying out my current context of belonging and disorientation, and then probe CMU's mission and commitments to identify resources and spaces for intercultural growth. Within CMU's commitment to welcoming generous hospitality and cultivating radical dialogue, I identify opportunities to spur diverse belonging at CMU.

Belonging and Disorientation

I have worked for CMU in a variety of teaching positions – as a sessional, as contract faculty, then tenure-track faculty, and now a tenured faculty member. I have also worked in administrative roles as Academic Director of the Canadian School of Peacebuilding and as MSC Director of Practicum. As I write this

in 2024, I am within the first year of a new administrative position as CMU's Director of Research and Program Grants and relocated on CMU's main campus. My new administrative role and CMU's decision to close and sell the MSC campus building are two reasons why I have relocated to main campus.

The atmosphere on main campus is livelier than at MSC and its patterns, given my job, are less familiar. At CMU's main campus, more staff and faculty and an array of academic and student life programs enliven the ambience. I no longer engage in mostly autonomous work to prepare course materials and teach. With a three-year secondment to the research office, I am not teaching. Instead, I am coordinating a collaborative research project with MCC, tracking research grants, systematizing the work of the research office, learning the Tri-Council funding systems, and supporting faculty in their research plans. I am interacting regularly with faculty and staff with whom I have not previously related. I am becoming immersed and energized in this university life. At times I am also overwhelmed by the enormity of work, the longer commute, the demands of scheduling, and the required learning to do this work well. I am challenged in my new role.

In addition to such challenges, I also feel disoriented, a feeling that stems from the confounding events and loss experienced during the 2022/23 school year. In the winter of 2023 and for reasons of economic necessity, CMU decided to close MSC's campus, relocating its faculty to main campus, moving classes into an online environment, and ending the four-year BA programs in conflict resolution studies, three- and four-year programs in international development studies, and the practicum program that I was directing. As a result of these closures, MSC's current offerings are a three-year BA in conflict resolution studies, with two of ten MSC instructors continuing to teach primarily through MSC. During the events leading to the closure, faculty were told that our teaching, to non-CMU graduates, was less valuable because we did not create CMU graduates who would monetarily support the school. This knowledge resulted in a collective loss in a sense of purpose.[2] Compounding that sense of loss was the forfeit of self-worth that derived from belonging.[3] The college was a place I had belonged for several years – where I was esteemed by students and colleagues, where my sexuality was just one diversity among many, and where I had grown tremendously as an instructor. My loss of belonging was heightened by the termination of two MSC staff positions and the reshuffling of students into a mostly online skeleton program. While CMU marked the closing of the downtown campus with an in-person event at the college and many shared feelings of gratitude for MSC as a place of meaning and belonging, my subsequent arrival at the main campus was a bit discombobulating given such a significant loss of place, belonging, and purpose.

I sought revived belonging on main campus, where I encountered a less outwardly queer-friendly place – a Christian institution requiring a faith commitment. The historical exclusion of Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (2SLGBTQIA) persons in the church and their continuing experiences of segregation is well-documented.[4] And while I have experienced many instances of welcome on the main campus, I also encounter testimonials of exclusion. As a member of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and Intercultural Health committee, I studied the research report on the state of EDI at CMU. The report offers many starting points for deepening work toward intercultural health at CMU and serves as a reminder that not all staff, students, or faculty on this campus are receptive toward 2SLGBTQIA people.[5] For several days after reading the report, I felt vulnerable to sneers and glowers. I was concerned that I would bump into and offend or feel offended by the people who did not want me on campus. In such moments, I feel excluded and vulnerable.

Contrasting these moments of exclusion are many experiences of welcome that I have received at CMU's main campus – chocolate bars and handwritten cards from the registrar's department provided to relocating MSC faculty and staff; the invitation for my partner and family to come to CMU when I received the Kay and Lorne Dick Teaching Award; and many words of welcome as I organized my new office. CMU staff and faculty seem receptive to having me and other MSC faculty on campus.

And yet it is disorienting to feel welcomed and excluded at the same time.

The interplay of welcome and exclusion must be considered in relation to others' CMU experiences. How do students, staff, and faculty with marginalized and intersecting identities experience similar situations of being at the edge of belonging? How do they deal with the strangeness of a beautiful campus of nice people combined with sometimes subtle and sometimes crude experiences of discrimination? How do they make sense of their experience? While CMU's EDI report offers some answers to these queries, taking these questions and experiences for broader consideration illustrates a campus-wide challenge: How can CMU embrace the fullness of intersectional identities and build a CMU culture that is open to being shaped by others? How can CMU work toward intercultural health?

Building More Equitable Systems

The CMU ecosystem provides narrative and material supports for faculty, staff, and students with normative identities – those that are Anabaptist/Christian, cisgender, heterosexual, North American, white, and without disabilities. Additionally, CMU program staff offer specific support to international students and students with disabilities. However, CMU staff, faculty, and students who

identify outside those categories must find their own sustenance. Nonetheless, opportunities exist for CMU to build more equitable environments to benefit people whose identities of religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, race, or disability fall outside CMU's norms. The resources and opportunities to build more equity are found in CMU's mission, values, and commitments.

CMU's mission and four commitments aim to build possibilities for just relationships to flourish. Briefly summarized, CMU's mission is to prepare students to engage in the world as doers for positive change.[6] This positive change is named as "service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society."[7] To accomplish this mission, CMU commits to

1. Educate for Peace–Justice;
2. Learn through Thinking and Doing;
3. Welcome Generous Hospitality … Radical Dialogue; and
4. Model Invitational Community.[8]

These proclamations lead me to understand that CMU's investment and identity as an Anabaptist university is informed and motivated by Jesus Christ. With the goal of educating students and serving the community to promote living that is animated by deep justice and peace-loving relationships, CMU strives to create persons engaged in the world. These aspirational commitments shape CMU's community and could awaken the community to a wider embrace of difference.

Educating for peace-justice and learning through thinking and doing are active commitments to experiential learning with an emphasis on change. They are evidenced in CMU's intercultural Estamos programming, courses in peace and conflict transformation studies where students walk with the Bear Clan, student engagement in prison education through Walls to Bridges, and biology classes that take place in Assiniboine Forest, among many examples. CMU actively invites students to think through paradigms of peace and practise their commitments to building a more just world. We may find more opportunities to forge just structures as we discover how some people's needs are not being met at CMU.

Living out a commitment to generous hospitality portends welcoming and embracing persons with a diversity of identities. Being hospitable means learning what we do not know and communicating a willingness to learn. For the CMU community, that might imply learning about how different racialized identities experience barriers and systemic exclusions in their everyday academic and civil lives, and listening to, not dismissing, people's narrated experiences. Further, we can live out our embrace by learning from Elders and other Indigenous persons at Sandy-Salteaux Spiritual Centre, an Indigenous organization in relationship with CMU. Additionally, CMU can signal a

willingness to learn from others by making sure that invitations to contribute to the university are offered to gender-diverse persons – women, nonbinary, and transgender people specifically, and persons from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. For example, when CMU hosts a conference, organizers could seek out contributors and invite speakers from equity-deserving groups, not as tokens but as representative members of the CMU community. At CMU, we need to expand our understanding of hospitality into learning about differences so that we can engage difference.

Engaging difference is what happens in radical dialogue. CMU's commitment to radical dialogue is evidenced in public-facing events like the Face2Face series. In February 2023, CMU facilitated a conversation about political and social polarization, featuring an exchange among politicians who often find themselves on opposing sides. For me, one of the important learning moments occurred when a white politician asked questions of and listened to a politician of colour as he narrated an experience of discrimination. I observed tangible interest from a person with social privilege to seek out and begin to understand his colleague's experiences of racism as a Black male. In this moment, the white politician saw and recognized MLA Jamie Moses for some of his intersecting identities. This is also what we need to do at CMU, to be willing to recognize and engage with difference. Of course, in this engagement it is also important for people to be seen and visualized as more than survivors of exclusionary, racist, or capitalist systems of violence. Jamie Moses also illustrates Black excellence, shining for his leadership at the crossroads of unsustainable expectations and systemic barriers.[9] Similarly, leaders of Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre exemplify Indigenous excellence in a society marred by colonial attitudes of white superiority. Given that engaging difference happens in dialogue, we need to validate, through regular public and private practice, the interrogation of normative cisgender, male, white, heterosexual, and middle-class identities. We can begin to ask how these normative identities contribute to society and how they may also constrain the creation of more just living.

Finally, I consider the challenge for CMU to create and model the invitational community it sets out in its mission statement. An invitational community reflects on who it is, not for the purpose of navel-gazing but to expand and build possibilities. I appeal to all of us at CMU to consider whom we ask to speak and engage at CMU and to make sure that such invitations are accessible. While teaching the course "History and Strategies of Nonviolence," I invited Jordy Davis, an advocate for disabilities, to speak to the class. Since I had not seen how the stairs elevator functioned, I asked the receptionist to review this with me in advance of Ms. Davis's arrival in a motorized wheelchair. Unfortunately, on the day of her arrival, I needed to seek out additional supports to utilize the mechanism. I had not learned adequately, making it appear and showing

the reality that I was not accustomed to welcoming people with disabilities to campus. Like CMU, I need to learn more, be prepared to host, and be okay with the discomfort that may arise while engaging difference.

CMU's four commitments invite students, staff, and faculty to engage in challenging activities to further work toward a relationally oriented and healthy environment. We are all asked to do this radical relational and peacebuilding work in courses, through the many aspects of student life, in research, and in service. CMU has many relational partners to support this work, including the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre and representatives from the many equity-deserving groups on campus. Possibilities abound to invite persons different from us and from groups historically not welcome on campus.

Conclusion

I want to be recognized as the queer woman administrator and scholar that I am. I would like for all students, staff, and faculty also to be seen, celebrated, and cherished for who they are. Additionally, I want people whose identities fall outside of CMU's norm to create and shape this place – to foster diverse belonging on this attractive campus. The precedence of CMU's commitments to radical dialogue with generous hospitality can help us as we cultivate our curiosity to learn and appreciate differences. As we shed our adherence to conformity and come into comfort with potential disagreements, we take emboldened steps toward intercultural health. Let's all take up the challenge – of being aware of who we are, engaging in relationship, and promoting belonging among diversity at CMU!

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7

In-Betweenness and Mentoring Communities of Canadian Mennonite University

Jonathan M. Sears

To reckon with the Canadian Mennonite University that I believe in means narrating how I have been shaped through this place. For me, "this place" includes the main CMU campus at 500 Shaftesbury Boulevard in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It also includes two program sites that no longer shape my CMU experience: Outtatown Discipleship School, with the French Africa program that closed in August 2017; and the 520 Portage Avenue site of Menno Simons College (MSC), which closed in June 2023. In reckoning, therefore, I dwell on what has been and is no longer, to honour what has shaped a journey of growth, loss, and change. New possibilities emerge from what I have learned from the people with whom it has been and continues to be my pleasure and privilege to work.

My Outtatown experience I frame in terms of learning about God and myself through encounters with others. My MSC experience I frame in terms of challenges of in-betweenness. My main CMU campus experience I frame in terms of theological diversity.

The CMU that has shaped me encompasses and cultivates "multiple mentoring communities" and demonstrates that "at its best, higher education is distinctive in its capacity … in the formation of critical adult faith. It does so most profoundly when it functions with clear consciousness of its role as a mentoring environment composed of multiple mentoring communities."[1] I have also come to practise my profession believing that I teach from who I am, and that "as I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together … In fact, knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life."[2]

In teaching from who we faculty are and are becoming, alongside students and staff with whom we learn, the work of self-knowledge, meditation, and prayer is never an extra but an essential component of living into a life of learning and personal transformation.[3] Taking seriously this inner work in community is part of "composing and being composed by meaning,"[4] and is centred on

an ethics of building trust in what is trustworthy. Through the multiple mentoring communities that CMU has encompassed and still encompasses, I have participated in teaching and learning about the "whole knower and the whole of life."[5] This aptly names the liberal arts and sciences at a faith-based, hope-drawn, and love-led university.[6] If an ultimate trust in an underlying or overarching unity shapes teaching and learning in ways that are essentially beyond ready consensus, then whole-knower-person-and-life studies must embrace divergent approaches and different world views manifest in and from multiple mentoring milieus.

Outtatown: Trusting God's Greatness in Encounters with Others

> Hospitality is the insistence that life must be kept open to those unlike us, not only for their sake, but for ours as well … the neighbor is not extra, marginal or elective. The neighbor is definitional to social reality. The neighbor is indispensable for health, not only to care for but as a giver of gifts which we cannot generate ourselves.[7]

Working with participants in the former Outtatown French Africa program, I learned to trust that God is greater than our anxiety about the unknown and unfamiliar, particularly when "others" may be represented as threatening or fearsome. I taught Outtatown students headed to Burkina Faso about regional history and culture, Islam, and some basic phrases in a local language, Jula/Bamanankan, drawn from my own experiences of living and working in neighbouring Mali. Knowing that Outtatowners would face cross-cultural and inter-religious encounters outside of their comfort zones, I wanted to amplify and empower their openness to new perspectives and possibilities. In doing so, I revealed and discovered aspects of myself in new ways.

I shared greetings and useful phrases (about food, water, and washrooms) in Jula, but also benedictions, which even outside of their significance at baptisms, weddings, and funerals are ubiquitous in conversation: *Ala ka* …, "May God …."

> *Ala ka nɔgɔya ke*, "May God improve your health."
>
> *Ala ka samiya diya*, "May God make it a good rainy season."

Each time I worked with Outtatowners, my experiences became more than a subject of my expertise. I became vulnerable about my personal faith. I realized more fully that by living and learning immersed in a West African Muslim milieu far from the faith of my Canadian Anglican ancestors, I had been transformed. God's ubiquitous presence was made new and strange for me. I learned in Arabic to say *Assalamualaikum*, "Peace be upon you"; to preface any task by invoking *Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim,* "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"; and to let go and let be, *Inshallah*, "God willing."

In sharing this with Outtatowners, out of necessity I relinquished a posture of certainty to ask genuinely if prayer, selflessness, and generosity during Ramadan or Lent amounted to fatalistic submission or an engaged yieldedness to the divine will in creation. Drawn to wonder without sure answers, I could grasp my faith again: renewed, deepened, and emboldened. *Alhamdulillah*, Thanks be to God.

With Outtatowners I participated in a deep and dynamic trust that faithful Christian discipleship is formed in community with other Christians of various confessions, denominations, orientations, and positionalities, as well as in relation to other religious traditions. Learning with Outtatowners moved me to reconsider my assumptions about what diversity might encompass, as well as how otherness – including my identity made strange – could expand my perspective and challenge my own self-image. Deliberate yet sometimes surprising encounters with others, who may bear variously visible differences, call differently for me to reconsider, and perhaps reimagine, the aspirations worthy of my concern, commitment, and response.

Menno Simons College: Gifts and Challenges of In-Betweenness

Through MSC I did 90 percent of my teaching for fifteen years. In the Senior Seminar in international development studies each year, I learned from students about their practicum placements working to end poverty, for justice, healing, and housing, and to welcome newcomers. Living at a few addresses close to MSC for a decade, I commuted daily by bike, bus, or on foot; this gave me brief glimpses into the vulnerability that shapes many people's lives in the downtown neighbourhoods around the college. In that context, I was challenged and humbled to accompany students who showed themselves committed in solidarity, abidingly hopeful, and willing "to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world."[8]

I have indeed participated in many good things with students and colleagues through MSC, "a CMU department, dedicated to interdisciplinary education that explores conflict, poverty and inequality," with programming delivered "in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg."[9] And yet, especially as MSC Associate Dean from 2020 to 2023, I wrestled with the increasingly evident limitations of CMU's mission expressed through MSC, a site and curricular space that I call *in* but not *of* the University of Winnipeg. My professional home – my sense of belonging, loyalty, and commitment – at and through MSC was always already "within and between two worlds."[10] What seemed, when I joined in 2007, to be a trustworthy inheritance I gradually understood to be essentially indeterminate in its liminality of institutional affiliation.

I and others acknowledged and responded to the constraints of in-betweenness (e.g., material, organizational, and spatial) unevenly and differently. This allowed dissonances to abound as we served students at the intersection of two universities of dissimilar scales, cultures, and affordances. Recently, I have felt as if I am departing prematurely from a foreign mission field into which I never knew I had been sent. Although I did not feel like I was from the University of Winnipeg, my "host country," neither did I feel sent from my "passport country," CMU, the ground of my livelihood and profession. Being an unwitting missionary in this way, I have felt some of the emotions that career missionaries report upon returning prematurely from the field: grief, anger, anxiety, guilt, shock, discouragement, and resentment, along with struggling to feel useful while feeling "misunderstood or forgotten."[11]

In my former administrative role, I felt a responsibility to keep these emotions in check, to downplay their disruptiveness. And yet in minimizing the changes triggered by multiple constraints, I also felt disloyal to my MSC-based colleagues. These colleagues continue to teach me by their example: to be authentic and vulnerable with each other; to honour emotions within a culture of mutual support, even as critical institutional and financial in-betweenness have unmoored us from familiar locations, practices, and relationships.

Unmoored, I can still dwell in and bear witness to hope. I can honour a journey of loss, change, and growth during the current storms and beyond, as well as listen, share resources, build resilience and adaptability. A posture of relinquishing a need for control makes possible, though not easy, a certain yieldedness and acceptance. Even as my MSC seasons end and I wonder what might have been done differently in the past, new possibilities emerge because of how I have been shaped by the colleagues and students with whom I have worked.

CMU's Shaftesbury Campus: World View Diversity and Some Virtues of Small

After a class session on international relations theory, a student said to me, "I'm not a pacifist. My tradition – Christian Reformed – has a just war theology." I guessed that the student worried that this perspective might not fit into the course, given CMU's roots in peace churches and commitment to "educating for peace–justice."[12] Prompted thus, as a political scientist I affirmed the value of questioning pacifism. I stressed that *state actors may resort to lethal force based on* an understanding of the kind of sovereignty that a state has in its internal and external relations, distinct from but within the context of the sovereignty of Jesus as Lord.

I was also moved to reconsider theological and practical elements of my Anglican church background and the so-called right to war (*jus ad bellum*).

The student posed again for me questions of violence: direct and indirect, local and global. Such interdenominational dialogue continues to move the Anglican communion and other traditions to consider Anabaptist thinking and practice to revisit their own understandings and practices.[13] In teaching political science, I now wrestle more with the responsibility of last resort to resist armed evil with lethal force. In fellowship with congregants and colleagues, I now wrestle more with the sword and the cross, *l'épée et la croix* in the bilingual lyrics of Canada's national anthem.[14] To have my own assumptions questioned and refined is precisely why hospitable encounters with others matter, and why ongoing and dynamic self-knowledge is so crucial to teaching and learning.

My CMU Story Continues in This Place

I have been shaped through this place, which is actually many places. Multiple mentoring communities shape both faculty and students. Grieving, relinquishing, and honouring passing seasons, I can strive to seek new ways to nurture existing communities and to dream and cultivate new ones at, through, and beyond CMU. By being present and vulnerable we can become profoundly available to "be seen" by each other and to bear witness to each other's losses, emergence, and transformation.[15]

In bearing witness and being seen, through us CMU can be in and of many places – figuratively and literally. Since I first read Menno Simons's 1539 statement "true evangelical faith … has become all things to all people,"[16] I have resisted the idea of one story for every experience of every population. I resist too an ostensibly definitive expression of a seemingly totalizing narrative. Conversely, I am encouraged by the possibility, which I do not fully grasp, that good news can and must encompass many elements of what meaningfully "shall be for all people" (Luke 2:10) and embrace "whosoever" seeks to encounter God (John 11:26).[17]

Given the apparent dichotomies of deconstructive critical thinking on the one hand and integrative transformative practice on the other, the adventure of teaching, learning, and living entails "holding the tension of opposites,"[18] the "both-and" perspectives and paradoxes that we inhabit. To seek purposive lives means learning to stand and act in "the gap between the way things are and the way we know they could and should be … faithfully holding the tension between reality and possibility, without letting cynicism or idealism take us out of the action."[19]

To stay in the action is to navigate many worlds. Multiple and divergent ways of knowing and being are as significant as any particular identity. Multiplicity, however, does not offer a simplistic pluralism or relativism of possible things in which to trust. As a political philosophy professor once said to me, "Sure Jon, everything may be relative, but relative to *what*?" I am persuaded that CMU

can embrace a deep and dynamic trust that hope-drawn and love-led people are formed through encounters with others: with those of various Christian confessions, denominations, and orientations, and with those of diverse religious traditions and perspectives.[20] If an underlying or overarching unity is to be met along paths that are essentially beyond ready consensus, then we can nurture trust in a unity that we cannot fully grasp, control, or contain. I trust that we will shape the CMU that shapes us and will foster habits of gathering and belonging; of deep encounters among others and our own selves made strange; of deliberate and sustainable in-betweenness.

This deliberate and sustainable in-betweenness would continue to embody the many virtues of multiple mentoring communities within a "small university."[21] Whether in chapel, athletics, student groups, co-curricular and residence-based programs, or simply by connecting in the cafeteria or at the bus stop, we cultivate crucial relational habits by being together at a *human* scale. Neither mass-produced nor as-fast-as-possible, this scale is fit for whole knowers to rise to the ongoing challenges of gathering, belonging, being, and learning together in vulnerability and resilience. In this environment can flourish good news that can be many things to all sorts of people.

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8

Transformative Learning in Music Therapy Education

Lee-Anne Dowsett

Canadian Mennonite University's "Time of Reckoning" symposium offered an opportunity to reflect on what we think we are doing in our work at our university, and for me to do so for the bachelor of music therapy program. In some ways, I feel that the music therapy program is completely different than every other degree at CMU; it's a pre-professional program and its focus is relatively narrow: developing knowledge and skills for entry into the profession of music therapy. In other ways, I feel that what we do within music therapy exemplifies the mission of CMU, namely inspiring and equipping students for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation. This essay is an attempt to shed some light on the kind of learning and outcomes we aspire to in the music therapy program through the lens of transformative learning.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is an adult education learning theory described by Jack Mezirow.[1] Transformative learning is different than learning how to do something or how something works; rather, it is learning that changes the learner deeply by challenging their previously unexamined perspectives. Through a process of examining, questioning, and revising, students experience a shift in perspective that leads to new ways of understanding themselves, modification of their belief system, and changes in their actions. Students emerge with the confidence, skills, and knowledge that allow them new ways of being in the world. In our case, that means students develop an understanding of what it means to be a therapist and the skills to bring themselves and their music into a therapeutic space to help others.

Despite a relatively short program duration (two and a half years), the music therapy faculty at CMU are committed to facilitating transformative learning for students, starting by creating an environment where this type of change is possible. One part of this is ensuring safety. In-class experiences are not therapy, but we do play in a therapeutic space where students are encouraged to be vulnerable, self-disclose, and engage in both a group and a personal process. Strategies such as building trust among the cohort and commitments to confidentially help to create conditions where students can show up

authentically and safely. While each student comes with different strengths and levels of experience, we acknowledge that we are all learning alongside each other and work to develop a culture of experimentation, creativity, and discovery in the classroom.

Affirmation and Disruption

The first phase of transformative learning involves two parts: (1) affirming where students are starting from; and (2) disrupting current frames of reference, leading to some discomfort or disorientation. At CMU, we have wonderful students entering our music therapy program: they are strong musicians, bright students, they have experienced the power of music in their own lives, and they have a strong vocation for using their time, energy, and gifts to help others. These are all things that are easy to affirm. So then, what exactly do we want to interrupt?

One such point of disruption is students' understanding of music itself. Questions we explore include: What exactly is music? What is music for? What is "good" or "bad" music? In the Music department at CMU, we start asking these questions in the first semester, and those conversations continue when they enter music therapy studies in the third year. Many of our students have over a decade of music training, often within a classical background. Being able to perform a difficult Chopin piece on the piano is truly a great accomplishment; however, in the context of trying to make a connection with a five-year-old child who struggles with regulation, it might prove to be completely unhelpful.

One of the ways that we explore the meaning and use of music is through improvisation assignments. Improvisation, one of the main methods used in music therapy, consists of a participant making up music on the spot, either alone, with the therapist, or with others. When improvising, a space is created for nonverbal self-expression, exploring interaction with others, working through emotions, practising interpersonal skills, and testing creativity.[2] Music therapy students are encouraged to explore making music in unconventional or less structured ways in order to turn off their "thinking" brain and turn on their "feeling" brain. We consider questions such as: What feelings do different types of music evoke? How are we emotionally touched or moved by music? How did they feel before, during, and after their playing? Was there anything they learned about themselves during the experience? In later stages of learning, we re-engage the analytical brain (e.g., What time signature evokes a lullaby if we're trying to help a sick baby fall asleep?), but the first steps are to help students reconnect with music on a more intuitive level and engage in embodied learning.

Sometimes music is nice sounding and sometimes it is not. It can feel uncomfortable for students to widen their understanding of music after many

years of learning and perfecting how to make what they understood to be "good music." However, this discomfort is welcomed; a key part of transformative learning is feeling the unease of our previous assumptions no longer serving us. This helps to propel learners into new ways of understanding and making meaning. As they expand their understanding of what purpose the music serves, students might move from rigid, sterile, reserved playing to a place of greater flexibility, expressivity, and responsiveness to others, all essential elements in music therapy. Also, that music can hold and express everything from sublime beauty to all sorts of negative emotions is exactly why we use music in therapy. Music offers a way to validate and give voice to the full breadth of human experience in an organized way.

Critical Assessment of Assumptions

As students progress through the stages of transformative learning and begin to work with the questions and dilemmas arising in their learning, things start to shift: their defences are lowered and they begin to actively reflect on their previously held assumptions. As faculty, we help students to recognize that while change can be difficult, the discomfort they experience is part of the progress of growth. Over time, students' emotional experience shifts from discomfort and anxiety toward openness, interest, and curiosity in a positive, upward spiral of learning.

The Personal Culture Paper is another assignment I have used as part of this learning process. Students investigate their own lived experience of culture within their family of origin and their communities. Students also examine their intersectional identities of privilege or non-privilege and dig deeper into understanding how their own beliefs and values have been shaped. This assignment culminates in students writing an original song as a way of integrating these reflections and looking forward to where they would like to grow and progress. These compositions are deeply personal and demonstrate the depth of learning happening as well as the transformation process underway.

Trying Out New Ways of Being

The next stages in transformative learning include exploration of new roles and behaviours, making a plan for moving forward, and putting the plan into action. As the learning process in music therapy unfolds, students move from the classroom setting into fieldwork under the supervision of certified professionals. Here students can try out new ways of being with people in their roles as student music therapists in real-life clinical and community settings.

A recent graduate completed a practicum in a school setting where they worked alongside a certified music therapist (MTA), applying their in-class learning and continuing to develop fundamental skills in assessment, treatment planning,

interventions, and documentation. As is typical in music therapy practicum placements, the student tried things out, reflected, returned to the seminar and processed the events from their placement, modified their plans, and returned to the field with revised and improved ideas, and again returned for reflection and more revision.

An added layer to this student's learning was the context for this practicum: this school was situated within an Indigenous community. Alongside practising their foundational skills, this student was grappling with another layer of reflexive questions: What does it mean to be a person of settler background coming from outside the community to provide services to Indigenous children? What was their role here? How could they provide culturally safe music therapy in this context? The learning throughout this practicum was multilayered, rich, and deeply impactful to their understanding of self-as-therapist, and as the learning was openly shared within class, the entire cohort was able to learn and grow together.

Gaining Confidence and Integrating Learning

The final fieldwork portion of our degree is a pre-professional internship, comprising supervised practice of 1,000 hours in the field. This placement allows students to continue to apply and integrate their learning while developing and articulating an individual philosophy of music therapy that fits them, their values, and their understanding of how music helps people. Despite inevitable challenges, this phase of learning often culminates in feelings of joy, pride, enthusiasm for moving forward in a new way, and a drive to continue to learn throughout one's career. The process of transformative learning serves students as they go on to support their future clients in navigating their own experiences of transformation within music therapy.

Conclusion

Alongside our students' transformative learning process, I am undergoing my own transformation as an educator. Central to that journey lately is critically examining our field, including its foundational texts, theory, and education programs, which have been largely based on normative assumptions about human development and Western ideas about therapy,[3] and have developed from a perspective that may uphold aspects of racism,[4] ableism,[5] and other oppressive systems.

Questions I am wrestling with now include: How do my understandings and beliefs about music therapy and education serve or not serve our students, and where do I need to keep learning? How do I effectively teach and support students with diverse musical backgrounds and different cultural understandings of what it means to be a helper? In what ways can I assist neurodiverse students in

acquiring the skills they need in the clinical setting? Sharing my own learning journey with students has fostered a collaborative exploration, allowing us to learn from and with each other.

CMU is in its own transformation process as the university adapts and evolves. Through hosting this symposium for reflexivity, CMU showed its commitment to interrogate what we think we're doing and to help chart a course forward. This process not only benefits our students but enriches our community, where a niche, process-oriented program like music therapy can thrive. I look forward to continuing to learn, grow, and evolve within this institution as we encourage and support our students through their transformative experiences here.

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9

CUREs, and the Curricular Advantages of Being Small and Thinking Theologically

John L. Brubacher

Early in my time at Canadian Mennonite University, I read an article in Skeptic magazine titled "Turning the Biology Curriculum Upside Down," written by Clark Lindgren, a biology professor at Grinnell College in Iowa.[1] Lindgren invited his readers to imagine Tommy, a hypothetical student who goes to university to study the tuba … only to wind up not having the opportunity to actually play the tuba until his final year, after he had gained enough experience in tuba theory, history, and mechanics to be given access to an actual instrument. As Lindgren noted, this is an absurd scenario – music programs do not run that way, for good reason. However, he rightly pointed out that anyone who has spent time as a university science major would probably find this fictional "tuba curriculum" to be quite familiar. Wrote Lindgren, "Only rarely are students involved in an actual scientific study – that is, an inquiry in which the answer is not known by anyone (including the instructor)."[2]

The Grinnell biology department's answer to this problem was to develop a first-year introductory course in which students spent a semester working to help answer a genuinely open question in biology. The course had multiple sections, each focusing on the interests of a different faculty member. That was not a new idea at the time, but it was an uncommonly adopted one. These days, this pedagogical approach is common enough that we now have an acronym for such things: course-based undergraduate research experiences, or CUREs.[3] However, such courses remain uncommon – particularly ones in which a whole class of students (rather than selected individuals) spend a full semester working together on a project for which no one knows the outcome (rather than re-exploring previously covered territory) *and* for which there is an interested external audience.

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When we talk about CMU with prospective students, our small size often comes up as a distinctive – and overall, positive – aspect of the institution. When discussing the virtues of smallness, we particularly tend to focus on the access that students have to faculty for answering questions and providing guidance

and support. We *are* small, community-oriented, serious about mentoring relationships, and highly invested in our students' success. I do not want to downplay the importance of any of those values. But what I think we could say more about, especially with respect to the natural sciences, are the *curricular* and *pedagogical* advantages of smallness.

One of the reasons that CUREs remain uncommon in science programs, especially in early years, is that scaling them up for implementation in a typical (large) introductory class is a daunting logistical challenge. Here at CMU, however, our small size gives us more flexibility to try new ideas with shorter lead time. If I or my colleagues want to implement a course organized around an overarching semester-long research project, we can do that without having to overcome a lot of bureaucratic or programmatic inertia, without having to retrain a small army of teaching assistants and preparatory staff, and without having to get a lot of people on board for a major shift in pedagogy. Additionally, when we develop a research-oriented course, our students will carry out that research directly with our faculty – experienced scientists who have all trained and worked in top-notch programs. To be fair, CUREs can and do happen at scale in large institutions (in fact, the project I will focus on here started at a very large one indeed) but in my experience, they're implemented at smaller places at a disproportionate rate.[4]

As an example, I will tell you a bit about the microbiology course I had the opportunity to teach this past winter. I should note I am not at all unique – in biology, my colleagues Rachel Krause and Nicolas Malagon have both developed their own CUREs, as have CMU faculty in other disciplines; my ordinariness underscores the point I am making.

BIOL 2200 is an introduction to microbiology focused primarily on bacteria. It has three hours of lectures and three hours of labs each week. To turn the course into a CURE, I "cheated" and adopted a program that already had been developed by a scientific hero of mine, Jo Handelsman at the University of Wisconsin. Dr. Handelsman is a soil microbiologist who studies the production of – and resistance to – antibiotics by soil microbes. She, like many people, is deeply concerned about the increasing prevalence of disease-causing bacteria that have become resistant to several antibiotics. These are the "superbugs" that seem to feature in news reports with increasing regularity, to the point that some are almost household names, like MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*). Some of these antibiotic-resistant pathogens are nearly untreatable with any medication currently available.[5] The Public Health Agency of Canada now estimates that one in four bacterial infections are resistant to the first-line medications used to treat them, and deaths from antibiotic-resistant infections in Canada number in the thousands annually (and globally in the millions). A

recent report by the Council of Canadian Academies describes likely scenarios in which the number of such deaths will expand dramatically by 2050.[6]

So, we have a problem. To make matters worse, there is little market incentive for pharmaceutical companies to invest in the discovery and development of novel antibiotics. As of December 2020, thirteen such new antibiotics were in phase-three clinical trials, and not all will eventually reach the healthcare system. Only about a quarter of these are truly novel medications in the sense that they work by a new mechanism of action, and few of those have activity against the drug-resistant bacteria identified as critical threats by the World Health Organization (WHO).[7]

Of the antibiotics that *are* in use, most are derived from molecules produced by soil bacteria. There is good reason to expect that many more such molecules remain to be discovered in soils around the world.[8] Thus, Dr. Handelsman's idea was to develop a workflow to screen for antibiotic-producing bacteria that would be implementable in introductory microbiology courses. She then obtained grant money to recruit and train partner instructors from institutions around the world to develop a broad collaborative network known as Tiny Earth. This program launched in 2018 and now involves students at hundreds of institutions worldwide.[9] And though Tiny Earth was born at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, an institution with over 40,000 undergraduates, most of the partner institutions in the network are small colleges and universities like CMU. I trained as a partner instructor in the summer of 2022; of my twenty colleagues in that training group, only one was working at a large, research-intensive university.

The basic idea of the Tiny Earth project is simple: it is the crowdsourcing (more precisely, "studentsourcing") of antibiotic discovery. Students isolate pure strains of bacteria from a soil sample (we took ours from the woods in the "back 40," just south of Charlie and Jocelyn Peronto's house here on campus). Each student gathers a collection of a couple dozen strains of soil isolates and cultures them alongside "tester" strains – non-hazardous bacteria but close relatives of species that have been identified by the WHO as priority pathogens. The students identify isolates that inhibit the growth of one or more tester strains: those soil bacteria are producing something that is acting as an antibiotic. Students can then select strains that look promising and characterize them. Ultimately, they deposit information about their experiments and results in the Tiny Earth database.[10] If we find that we have some particularly interesting strains, we can send samples to Wisconsin for further genetic and biochemical analysis – and carry on working with them ourselves.

For fall 2023, I have three independent-study students following up on seventeen provisionally interesting strains isolated by the BIOL 2200 class the

previous winter. Will any of them bear fruit? Who knows? For any individual isolate, the odds are not high. But the Tiny Earth network now involves about 14,000 students per year. The database is approaching 20,000 described isolates, of which over 4,000 have been deposited in the central collection in Madison, Wisconsin. One hundred twenty-five of these have had their full genomes sequenced, and scientists in Madison have determined the structures of twenty-eight bioactive molecules produced by isolates in the collection.[11]

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Here at CMU, students in BIOL 2200 learn the microbiological skills and techniques that are standard for an introductory microbiology course. But they learn these in the context of doing real science: asking questions that no one knows the answer to, and seeing where their observations lead them. The feedback I have gotten from my students is consistent with the emerging consensus about the benefits of such courses: students are engaged and empowered by participating in a project of genuine public interest with global scope, which gives them a chance to envision themselves as scientists. Studies of CUREs routinely demonstrate such benefits – particularly for first-generation university students, and for students from underrepresented populations that have historically faced barriers of inclusion in the broader scientific community.[12]

I have also heard from my students that the pace of the research was slower than expected, and that the plans changed too much week by week. Well, welcome to science, folks! Also – challenge accepted for next time.

A final, important note about why I think it matters that we participate in this project and others like it, *at CMU* – which has been described as "a university of the church, for the world."[13] When facing a wicked problem, scientists will tend to look for technical solutions. *Problem*: bacteria are rapidly becoming resistant to our most useful antibiotics. *Solution*: find new antibiotics. But antibiotic discovery is only part of the solution, because it does not address the underlying causes of antibiotic resistance. These are many, but they have common roots in the human inclination to find quick, cheap ways to maximize productivity and efficiency in the short term, often at the expense of good stewardship, thoughtful engagement, relationship building, and long-term thinking. These are psychological, social, and indeed theological issues; addressing them requires us to weave together insights about human nature and purpose from the full breadth of academic disciplines.

We can only hint at that interdisciplinary work in any single microbiology class, but it lies at the heart of an institution that has a theological mission, as does CMU. I am not saying that CMU, or Mennonites, or Christians have an exclusive interest in interdisciplinarity and big-picture thinking, or that we always get

it right. But the fact that we say, explicitly, that *in this place we aim to train disciples of Jesus Christ* centres a big question about what that discipleship means – and foregrounding that question encourages interdisciplinary conversations with a depth and regularity that I have not experienced in many other places. Those conversations give us the opportunity to train budding scientists with a perspective and a skill set that are badly needed in today's world.

John L. Brubacher is associate professor of biology at Canadian Mennonite University. His research has primarily focused on the evolution and development of animal germ cells (the lineage of cells that produce eggs and sperm), but he also has ongoing interests in microbiology.

10

The Music of Mentoring and the Songs We Share

A Discourse Between Mentor and Mentee

Janet Brenneman and Kelsea McLean

What are the stories that we tell of our teaching and learning? What are the songs that emerge that we share with our students? How do we decide which stories are worth telling? And what do our shared songs teach us about who we are and how we interact with others?

Storytelling is a large part of the teaching-learning process and has become a mainstay in choral music education pedagogy – whether that's the story of a particular piece of music, the story of how we interpret musical and poetic ideas, or the story of best practices for developing technique and fostering musicianship. As we teach through storytelling, we create space for student voices to be heard, and we bear witness to the shared development of musical ideas. Implicit in the practice of telling stories and sharing narratives is the imagining and enacting change for our future selves: "Stories and narratives can be seen not only as retrospective agents of change but also as important agents of change in envisioning professional futures."[1] The creative process is a shared experience, and the result is a song that expresses shared values, reflects common goals, and demonstrates a keen understanding of what it means to be a community of learners.

What's Our Story?

Here we seek to tell a story that will provide a snapshot into a mentoring relationship that is now over fifteen years in the making. We use "song" as a metaphor throughout our descriptions of our shared experiences and the creation of our shared story. Our story-song does not seek to offer universal truths or the answers to challenging questions, but rather provides a lens through which we perceive the stories of those around us. We aim to offer our story and communicate a lived, experienced reality that we as narrators accept as truth for our understanding.[2] With this in mind, we set out to have a conversation, tell our stories, and share what we have learned as a result of our mentorship. The following exchange is a small window into the past seventeen years of our mentoring story.

Janet: Kelsea McLean and I have always had a connection – a teacher-student bond that grew throughout Kelsea's time as a student at Canadian Mennonite University, beginning in 2006. Kelsea will describe herself as a reluctant CMU applicant – but there were a few external nudges along the way that led her to begin studies in music therapy and ultimately graduate in 2010 with a Bachelor of Music in music education. Kelsea then completed a Bachelor of Education at University of Saskatchewan and her Master of Education at Acadia University. She currently lives in Prince Edward Island, where she enjoys a thriving career as a school music educator and as the artistic director of the award-winning treble ensemble, Sirens, and its younger counterpart, Harmonia Youth Choir. Kelsea and her husband, Alex, have two beautiful and energetic young children, George and Rosie.

Of course, when I first met Kelsea, she was not yet established in this thriving career; rather, she was much like the other first-year students I encounter at the start of each new school year. And yet, there was something more that I could see in Kelsea in those early years – she had what I would describe as a spark, a penchant for wanting to know more, and I could detect an unrelenting drive to claim her education at CMU.[3] I firmly believe that Kelsea's conviction in claiming what she needed to fulfill her educational goals was a strong motivator to establish and nurture our relationship as mentor and mentee.

Kelsea: I assumed I would be one of the last people to speak at a CMU symposium because I admit that I chose CMU begrudgingly and out of a perceived lack of options. I wanted to be enrolled in a music therapy program, and CMU happened to be the closest option. When I think back to my first couple of years at CMU, I remember thinking I was a bit of a rebel or a black sheep, not finding my footing for some time.

This changed when Janet invited me into a pivotal conversation in my second year. She challenged me to rethink my time and focus at CMU. While I had been going through the motions and doing well in my classes, I lacked passion and drive. Our conversation that day greatly influenced my decision to alter my focus to music education.

After our discussion, a weight was lifted off my view of CMU. I felt that my participation in classes and campus life was suddenly more genuine because my choices were finally aligned with my skills and talents. I had found my place. Truthfully, I do not think I would have discovered my path had Janet not prodded me to dig deeper. This reimagining of my identity at CMU created a thirst for more knowledge and experience. I actively sought out Janet, who will tell you that I am a persistent person;

I showed unyielding eagerness for her knowledge and experience. I essentially nagged her into being my mentor. Fortunately, Janet enjoys my company; otherwise, I might be quite annoying!

More seriously, CMU afforded me an incredible gift. This institution effectively worked to shape my ideas and values that I now hold as an adult and an educator. However, CMU's greatest gift is the mentorship relationship I developed with Janet. She empowered me to own my abilities as an educator.

Janet: It is very interesting that you point out both a professor coaxing you off your perceived path and your seeking out the mentoring relationship. This is similar to my own story of being mentored. My mentor identified a capacity for conducting and teaching in me that I did not realize I possessed. She coaxed me out of my shell – a space that had been safe for me – and nurtured me through what became a beautiful journey of respect and love for all that she could teach me.

Kelsea: We playfully considered titling this piece "Who's Mentoring Whom?" because as our relationship evolved over the years, it became evident that the learning wasn't one-sided – I was gaining insights from Janet, and in many ways, she gained just as much from me. In the literature, this is called the reciprocal exchange of mentoring.[4] In meaningful and effective mentoring relationships, both mentee and mentor are invested in maintaining the relationship and learning from one another. For a mentoring relationship to be sustainable, the mentee receives knowledge, guidance, wisdom, or even professional connections, but the mentor must also feel as if they are being rewarded. This may come in the form of expressed gratitude, time spent in conversation, or feeling fulfillment in their mentee's successes.

Master teachers are receptive to learning from their students. I will never forget the day Janet emailed me for repertoire ideas. My "Dear Diary" that day was bursting with pride and disbelief: my mentor wanted my advice! As our mentoring relationship has progressed, Janet has consistently sought my perspective, affirming the genuine value she places on my opinions. Reciprocity is an acknowledgement that the mentor cannot be the keeper of all knowledge and that the mentee has something to offer.

As educators, it is tempting to become stuck in an altruistic trap. Many believe that those in mentoring roles just do it out of the goodness of their hearts. Certainly, there is an element of that, but there are intangible rewards to being a mentor if the mentee is doing their part to maintain that relationship.

Janet: Mentoring is a big commitment, and while I believe that I have a natural tendency to nurture the relationships I've developed as a daughter, sister, wife, and mother, the relationships I have with students require other energy and purposeful effort. It is only natural that I would want to receive something in return for that effort – successful mentoring relationships are never one-sided in my experience.

How Have Our Mentoring Relationships Informed Our Respective Pedagogies? What Do We Carry Forward into Other Mentoring Relationships?

Janet: Teaching is both informal and formal guiding and mentoring. Classes and rehearsals are conversational and reciprocal. One of my students recently described our classes together "as a safe space to express their own thoughts," a space where the conversation was, in her words, "mentored." Modelling ways of knowing and doing, and then making explicit the learning process as we analyze our work together is a reciprocal way of engaging students in their musical development. In the choral rehearsal, leadership shines brightly when the conductor serves as guide and mentor in an interactive learning context that purposefully works against a top-down, patriarchal approach – the way I was sometimes taught. My mentor was keenly aware of the patriarchy as pedagogy in her generation and throughout her career, and she worked tirelessly to break down that model; perhaps this is the legacy she left me.

Kelsea: I have come to recognize that fostering connections with my students emerges as the most crucial aspect of my work. Everybody needs someone in their corner. We all need people and authentic connections to navigate the complexities of our world. Because of my CMU mentoring experience, I see the value in supporting the young people in my life, especially in a world that is increasingly focused on the individual. Mentoring relationships are a manifestation of community, and community-oriented systems are much healthier and more sustainable than ones focused on independence.

What Is the Biggest Takeaway from Our Mentorship? What Are the Outcomes?

Kelsea: Besides now calling Janet one of my dearest friends, numerous important moments illustrate the outcome of our mentorship. One such moment was when my choir performed on a national stage; Janet was there in the audience, beaming! During a national conference,

when I needed to bring my infant, Janet stepped in as "grandmentor," always at the ready. She helped me navigate being a professional while also trying to juggle motherhood. We have also both suffered major family losses recently, and Janet has been a confidante, someone to walk alongside on the grief journey. What started as my professor helping me commandeer my career path and identity has flourished into a beautiful friendship.

Consequently, CMU has instilled in me the value of mentoring, and I have built these systems into the choral organization I founded in Prince Edward Island. Last year, my organization launched a more formal mentoring opportunity called the Athena Mentorship Program, where one of our youth singers joins Sirens for a full-length concert. This program is an expression of mentorship extending beyond the individual to benefit the whole community.

Janet: As the mentor, I characterize our experience as confidence building, motivating, and joyful. I continue to uphold this particular relationship as the exemplar that motivates me to foster additional mentoring relationships with current students. I am strongly empowered to teach for learning through leadership, as I witnessed and experienced this model of the teaching and learning context myself.

How Does CMU Create an Environment That Fosters Mentoring Relationships?

Janet: CMU encourages this mentoring by making space for learning and interacting with each other – space that is initially curated in the classroom but that quickly expands beyond the classroom walls. We should not underestimate the power of attending chapels and forums together as faculty, staff, and students, along participating in social events, choir tours, keeping open office doors, and enjoying conversation over a cup of coffee at Folio.

These are the spaces that nurture the teacher-student relationship and foster learning through mentoring. The teaching spaces and experiences in the classroom also allow for opportunities to practise vulnerability; but the practice, development, and nurturing of mentoring relationships happens largely outside the time spent in the classroom.

Kelsea: Where CMU shines is in its ability to draw people into something bigger than just attending classes and doing their coursework. That had been my plan: show up, do what I needed to do, and leave with a degree. However, in my experience, I mattered at CMU.

> Artist and storyteller Morgan Harper Nichols wrote that "threads weave a pattern that often takes time to discern."[5] Time is remarkable because when reflecting on our past experiences, we can begin to affix meaning to our present circumstances. Collaborating on this research with Janet has required me to slow down and analyze my time at CMU. I can now discern that my short time here was life altering. Janet played a vital and indispensable role in shaping my CMU journey, contributing significantly to the transformative impact on both my life trajectory and identity.

How Are Our Mentoring Stories Relevant to the CMU Project?

Policymaker and historian Dr. Fiona Hill said that "we can sense when a particularly inspiring and honourable leader has improved our trajectory … it certainly illustrates for us that we must pay attention to the personalities and contexts of our leadership."[105] Teachers hold the ability to transform lives; we cannot minimize the value and impact of our CMU faculty and staff. Our best teaching is born out of connecting with our students – showing our vulnerability, taking those precious moments to check in with students, reframing our relationships as important hidden curricula, and teaching in those margins or blurred lines.

So what do we pay attention to in our leadership? Let our song be a challenge to think about your own mentorship lineage and how it informs your pedagogy. How were you mentored? Whom do you mentor and what have you learned from these relationships? What has your impact been and what do you want it to be? As you move forward, do not allow those connections you make with students to be overthrown by the demands of the syllabus. It is through building community and sharing our songs with students that we can inspire and evoke true change in the lives of our students.

Janet Brenneman is academic dean and professor of music at Canadian Mennonite University, where she teaches music education and conducts CMU choirs. Her research in music education focuses on gender issues and formation of choral conductors. In addition to leading CMU student choral ensembles, Janet is the artistic director and conductor of the CMU Festival Chorus and the Faith and Life Women's Chorus.

Kelsea McLean is the artistic director of the award-winning choral ensemble Sirens and its counterpart, Harmonia Youth Choir. Active as a choral adjudicator and clinician, she also teaches instrumental music in the public school system. Originally hailing from Saskatchewan, she now proudly calls Prince Edward Island home.

11

In Need of the Distant Past: The Place of History in a Mennonite University

Brian Froese

> *Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books.*
>
> – C.S. Lewis, Introduction to Athansius[1]

There are rare moments in contemporary Canadian public life where history is both respected and championed. The list of anti-historical actions in recent years is long, and often drawn up by government and educational actors and activists along presentist lines, that is, judging the past by present standards. From such thinking comes anachronistic assumptions such that a society can believe people who lived generations ago thought and felt as we do. As Robert Darnton, cultural historian of Enlightenment France, writes, "We constantly need to be shaken out of a false sense of familiarity with the past, to be administered doses of culture shock."[2]

On September 25, 2023, our Conservative Member of Parliament, Marty Morantz, led the "Nay" side to block the Liberal motion to expunge from the historical record, in both print and electronic forms, the embarrassing celebration in the House of Commons of a man who served in Germany's Waffen-SS Galicia Division during World War II. It was unfortunate enough that no one that day had enough historical sense to wonder what uniform one might likely wear in 1940s Ukraine while fighting Russians. If today it is the good side fighting Russians, it stands to reason it was that simple in the 1940s. Nevertheless, in his address, Morantz said (in paraphrase) that however embarrassing it was, it must be recorded and not forgotten. The temptations we must resist are those of an anti-historical falsifying of the historical record for present gain and a presentist pride soothing contemporary egos.[3]

What is the place of history in a Mennonite university? Or for Canadian Mennonites generally? One defining characteristic of Canadian Mennonites since the late 1960s, speaking of those groups who founded Canadian Mennonite

University, is social integration and acculturation. The great wrestling done over the past sixty years on almost any given issue is how to live a faithful Christian life while being a good modern Canadian. With the important exception of the two world wars, even nonresistance has been a low-stakes conviction in Canada. These questions are pertinent as CMU reckons with the saga of its commitment to current fashions, becoming in the process an increasingly present-oriented university, weakening its ties with its theological and historical past, as recent program adjustments seem to illustrate.

Yet all of these developments are rational and make sense when we understand CMU as a capitalist enterprise. It is no criticism to say, "No money means no university," and a powerful driving force is the accepted purpose of universities in our society, since World War II, as a broad entranceway to the middle class through better employment, networks, and experiences. CMU is a creature, practitioner, and victim of basic economic forces, and capitalism is not nostalgic.

However, the past is here. CMU is a partner with the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg and Mennonite Church Canada to run the Mennonite Heritage Archives. It also maintains a rare books room, has marked off a dedicated portion of its library for Mennonite historical materials, has a history department (which I concede is almost entirely modern in focus, so I am part of the problem), is located in a registered historical building, hosts an annual Anabaptist studies lecture series, maintains an Anabaptist studies requirement, and even has historical markers around campus. Among the most important of these markers are the naming of the building housing our library after the sixteenth-century Anabaptist, Pilgram Marpeck, and the graduate portraits with their Scripture verses, going back to the early years of the founding colleges, that adorn our hallways. In other words, while the public presentation, energy, and vast majority of curricular options of the university are more narrowly focused on the present, there is an historical architecture even if it exists mostly in the quiet background, reminding us of a longer horizon.[4] It can be said that CMU is both minimizing and preserving its heritage, a tension that sums up much of Mennonite history in Canada since the early 1970s.

Within these contradictory postures, CMU benefits from its religious, at times ethno-religious, heritage in a country where policies of multiculturalism give both protection and even access to public money. Nevertheless, as it exists in a competitive free-market environment, the challenge to remain viable, even to flourish, is to be marketable and distinctive enough without being too distinctive. Yet as much as Mennonites have developed a set of robust historical enterprises, this remains a burden for many.

There are many examples where Canadian Mennonites find history and heritage to be a problem. As early as 1971 there was a Mennonite pastor in

Vancouver who called for the name "Mennonite" to be dropped for being too cultural a moniker for an evangelizing people.[5] In my recently drafted book on Mennonite missions in British Columbia, the struggle over history and culture is a persistent theme. Some hide their history to proclaim Christ; some display it as a social justice credential.[6]

As historical consciousness weakens in society, Alan Jacobs offers us insight.[7] Jacobs argues that while it is a cliché that we study history to not repeat it, that implies wisdom; another cliché is the past is a foreign county where they do things differently, implying respect. This brings us into contact with two concepts that Jacobs calls "personal density" and "temporal bandwidth." The idea of "personal density" means that the more we engage the past, including the distant past, the weightier we become, less buffeted by the turbulent present. To do that is to bring our whole selves to past texts, peoples, events, and see through the kaleidoscope of human experience. For such density to be meaningful we need "temporal bandwidth," that is, the ability to understand and respond to difference with thoughtfulness and reflection, including when we encounter beliefs and practices considered offensive today but were not offensive in the past. That is, not being knocked over in surprise when encountering serious differences, such as the progressive racism of a century ago.[8]

Yet as we live and think in the present, what might Christian education and its responses to society over the centuries show us?

Christian Education and Society

As Michael Gauvreau so meticulously demonstrates in his book *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression*, as evangelicalism took root and flourished in nineteenth-century British North America, biblical historicism was its greatest threat. While leading Methodist educators such as Egerton Ryerson took on the task of shaping theological education in the British colony, other challenges were also present. The fumes of Millerite millennialism, for example, wafted over the border from the United States and it became a high-wire walk. The challenge for people like Ryerson was how to consolidate and temper the transitory enthusiasm of Methodist revivalism with longer-lasting, sober theological education that was both "sound" and morally formative. If that soundness and moral seriousness was one pole that grounded the wire, and a tempered revivalist enthusiasm the other, the pit below was a destabilizing millennial enthusiasm.[9]

Canada's West was in a very different position than either Britain or the United States, and the social, cultural, and theological educational focus was on grounding the new society. Theological education here lacked the abstract philosophizing of the larger powers; there was no Jonathan Edwards. For evangelicals, social

stability came from merging history with theology, framed by the Bible. This had a few interesting results. First, it meshed British Victorianism with American Bible culture, since the only affordable Scriptures came from the Methodist Book Concern in New York at heavily discounted prices. Second, as the Bible was believed to be true because of its historicity, such rootedness granted credibility to both its moral teaching and prophetic witness. Moreover, professors then were also pastors and preachers connected to the common population. In this context education was moral, biblical, historical, and clearly applicable to daily life.[10]

The evangelical colleges of the nineteenth century, by Gauvreau's examination, fared well until the early decades of the twentieth century. Historicism challenged long-cherished beliefs regarding Bible stories. Modernity and professionalization deepened, and one result was to separate professor from preacher. Another development was the rise of the social sciences, born out of the Industrial Revolution and directed to find solutions to the social ills brought on by rapid changes and new problems that arose from the new economy, including urbanization, immigration, and industrialization. Schools founded on Methodist evangelical principles, such as Wesley College in Winnipeg, by World War I shifted to the rapidly spreading Social Gospel, and sociology soon replaced soteriology.[11] By the 1920s the mainstream presence of evangelicalism in schools – of an adapted British origin wary of American excesses – dissipated quickly.

Yet one thing history offers is to see particularities in the generalities. If this was the story in eastern Canada and large cities, there were other experiences. For at the same time, William Aberhart, a Presbyterian soon to become a Baptist, moved from southern Ontario to Calgary, where he taught math and preached a dispensational gospel even while premier of Alberta. His protégé Ernest Manning then evolved from student-preacher to premier-preacher in the early 1940s. By this time a different trend had emerged among the Social Gospellers. Among them, men such as J.S. Woodsworth and a decade and a half later his protégé Tommy Douglas shifted from preacher to politico and either left their evangelicalism behind or kept it quiet, but it was there in the background. For the more fundamentalist, the threats were the power elite of eastern Canada, rapacious capitalism, and modernism; for the Social Gospellers, the threats were the power elite of eastern Canada and rapacious capitalism. The former started schools; the latter transformed existing schools. History for the Aberhart type remained part of the prophetic fossil record pointing to the future; and for the Social Gospellers history faded to the background as the present dominated with serious problems to solve.[12]

Meanwhile, ships on the Atlantic Ocean and trains on the transcontinental railway had brought Mennonite refugees from Stalin's Soviet Union to the prairie of southern Manitoba. These Mennonites continued the old pattern of immigration, settlement, and then celebration with the construction of

church buildings followed by schools – markers of stability, identity, and spatial belonging. Yet with this cohort, something new was attempted. Its members created a college to ensure the transmission of Mennonite Christian theology, history, Bible knowledge, music, and the German language, an institution that was neither a university beholden to the secularizing influences of higher criticism nor a Bible school vulnerable to North American dispensationalism and fundamentalism. In 1939 the formal process began that led to the opening of Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) in 1944. After a brief closure in the early 1990s, it reopened as Concord College in 1992 and in 2000 joined CMU and moved to Shaftesbury Avenue.[13]

Since the late 1930s, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada had also discussed the idea of starting a Bible-based school of higher learning. The conference struck a five-member committee in 1941 to study the feasibility of such a school, and in 1947 Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) opened its doors. Motivation to create such a school heightened after MBBC opened and conscientious objectors were returning home. Having briefly considered Rosthern, Saskatchewan, as a location, the college opened in a Winnipeg church, led by Jacob J. Thiessen. Soon CMBC moved to a house on Wellington Crescent for the years 1949–55, with a brief stay in Altona in 1950 on account of the infamous flood that spring. In 1955, CMBC moved to Shaftesbury Avenue and in 2000 joined CMU.[14]

Finally, in 1982, a charter by the Manitoba provincial government was granted to a group of Mennonite community leaders and the Friends of Higher Education, a group formed already in the 1970s for the purposes of furthering Mennonite higher education, to form Menno Simons College (MSC). The college located to the University of Winnipeg campus in 1985 and offered programs in international development studies and conflict resolution studies. In 2000, MSC joined CMU and in 2023 moved to Shaftesbury Avenue.[15]

All these moments came with challenges, anxiety, enthusiasm, and at times pain. From this accounting, CMU's saga begins at the end of the Great Depression and start of World War II. Our saga as a university is already eighty-five years old – over eight decades of thinking, planning, producing, and performing Mennonite higher education in Winnipeg. The pedagogies were to stabilize a somewhat transitory people, find a theological and historical grounding in modern Canada, and realize Anabaptism in a socially tangible way. The schools were always about living in a modern world in a thoughtfully Christian Mennonite way, even if from three distinct starting positions.

Such has been, however, the story of much of the history of Christianity and of Western education. We see it in the Hellenized world of the early church, where early Christians articulated their new faith in Greek, argued through Greek

categories, and wrote in Greek forms, as Werner Jaeger so elegantly sketches out in his book *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*.[16] Medieval universities emerged as corporations not only to facilitate learning and train clergy and the nobility but also to impose standards onto curricula, teacher credentials, and behaviour. By the thirteenth century, the seven liberal arts, divided into the famous trivium (rhetoric, logic, grammar) and quadrivium (music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy), formed the foundation for study in law, medicine, or theology while working with the recently recovered works of Aristotle.[17]

The fifteenth-century humanist tradition reached back over a millennium to the classical era to find its own usable past and then elevated the study of humanity and valorized Latin, Greek, and vernacular languages in the pursuit of truth in original sources. When this pedagogy crossed north of the Alps, its strong Christian emphasis on reading Scripture in Hebrew and Greek helped, in part, to set the stage for the Reformation – in which Christian humanism and university training played a significant role. To my mind, then, one of best things we could do is hire a classicist and a medievalist; after all, as Brad Gregory argues, if you want to understand the present, you need to go to the distant past.[18]

Conclusion

Historian George Marsden recounts that in the post-war world, the American university became about servicing American democracy. With the transition to mass university education then underway, it soon became a problem-solving, technocratic-oriented institution for modern society, and thereby was relevant. In an ironic turn, the growing progressive faith in science would either have to ignore or grapple with the university's place in doing lethal work for the state and its defence. Notably, Marsden highlights the instrumental work at the University of Chicago in creating the atomic bomb[19] – work that was being engaged only ten years after Tommy Douglas was across the quad taking sociology and theology courses, soaking in the Social Gospel, and a long way from his church in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. One day a professor took him and five other theology students to visit a Black church, recently vandalized by a group of white male youth, to hear famed attorney Clarence Darrow speak. Later in life Douglas told how this experience shaped his political life, soon to begin in 1935. He learned he could help and work with people in concert with a Social Gospel faith; but he would never try to be a Moses believing he was the deliverer.[20]

The relationship of Christianity and higher education has, over the centuries, been a near constant ebb and flow of oppositions and agreements. Universities have both stood athwart society as reformers and alongside society training its specialists, technocrats, and social and political elites. As the practitioners of higher education think about the future of Mennonite, or Christian, universities,

the choices to be made involve navigating immediate social concerns while maintaining a tether to a long tradition. As pedagogy evolves we must be mindful of whether it becomes embarrassing, like a government ignorant of the past, or party to developing mechanisms of forms of destruction – or will it be part of a centuries-long pursuit of shaping the educated Christian person to live in the world with "density"?

History, it turns out, is always present, even if in the background. As much as contemporary society attempts to escape history or to colonize it with presentist assertions of moral certainty, it behooves schools such as CMU to have the courage to cultivate a rich soil for the humanities in order to keep the long distant past nearby.

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12

Hoping Against Hope

Imagining a Christian University That Is Not Faith-Based

Chris K. Huebner

Let me start at the end and state the conclusion of this short essay: I will be suggesting that a Mennonite university such as Canadian Mennonite University runs the risk of becoming hopelessly lost if it imagines itself as a faith-based institution. This is not, however, because that makes it too religious and thus unpalatable to the tastes of the so-called secular age in which we live. Rather, it is because being merely faith-based is to be not religious enough. Or perhaps a better way to say it is that it is to be religious in the wrong way. A corollary to this claim is that it is also to be secular in the wrong way. But spelling out that latter claim is a topic for another day. For now, I want to argue that instead of envisioning itself as faith-based university, CMU ought to be construed as an enterprise that is hope-drawn. And this for two general reasons: (1) it reflects a better understanding of who Mennonites have historically taken themselves to be; and (2) it reflects a better understanding of Jesus and the kind of people he calls us to be. I will start by pointing to three emblems of Mennonite hope.

The first emblem: In the year 1629, a Mennonite man named Jelle Tebbesz uprooted his family in Friesland and relocated them to the bustling and booming city of Amsterdam. Jelle was a sailor by trade and had been living in the coastal Frisian port city of Stavoren. His arrival in Amsterdam appears to have coincided with a change of vocation. Archival records indicate that in 1629 he was admitted into the Amsterdam guild of brokers. He purchased a canal house on a street known as 't Water (today's Damrak). The house was identified by a gable stone depicting Saint Christopher. Since Saint Christopher is the patron saint of travellers, it might seem appropriate for someone who had been a sailor to live in a house that was marked by his presence. But that is not how Jelle Tebbesz saw it. He had the image of Saint Christopher removed from the façade of his house, presumably because he had misgivings about the forms of piety associated with the Catholic cult of saints. He replaced it with a new gable stone, or perhaps a signboard, that depicted the theological virtue of hope. His eldest son, Jarig Jellesz, later inherited the house and established a successful business dealing in dried fruit and spices. The store was known as de Hoop Op 't Water (Hope on the Water). It was through Jarig Jellesz's work as a merchant that he met and became close friends with the philosopher Benedict Spinoza, whose family had similar business interests. Jellesz

is a fascinating figure and in many ways serves to flesh out the broad strokes I am attempting to develop here.[1] But for now, I simply want to note that Jarig Jellesz lived under the sign of hope.

A second emblem: One Bible that would have been found in Mennonite churches during Jarig Jellesz's lifetime was an edition known as the Biestkens Bible. Nicolaes Biestkens was a Mennonite printer and publisher from Emden who produced numerous Mennonite books, including a Bible that came to be very popular among Dutch Mennonites and was subsequently circulated in editions printed by others. One common pattern that among its various editions is that the title page often includes a reference to hope in some form. The most straightforward of these can be found in an edition published in 1681 by a Mennonite preacher, printer, and bookseller from Leeuwarden named Hendrik Rintjes. Rintjes's books included a printer's mark depicting a man scattering seeds in a field accompanied by the words "Op Hoope" (On Hope).[2] In this and other ways, Mennonite Bibles and habits of reading them were marked by symbols of hope.

A third emblem of Mennonite hope can be found on a home for elderly women in Amsterdam called the Zonshofje. It was built on the site of a former Mennonite meetinghouse known as the Arke Noach (Noah's Ark) and continues to be used as a residence for Mennonite university students. On one of the walls, situated under a clock, is a poem written by the Mennonite poet Bernardus de Bosch (1708–86). Translated into English, it reads as follows:

> Faith has unfolded God's Word here
> Love built us this abode;
> Hope continues to draw us forward
> To see the Son on our souls;
> Inhabit time carefully
> And thus soar to the Ark of Salvation!

As were the elderly Mennonite women who once looked at the clock on the wall of the Zonshofje, the young Mennonite university students who live there today are reminded that they are called to lives drawn forward in hope. Which is to say that we are to live in such a way that we do not make ourselves enemies of time.

It is worth noting that the people associated with these three emblems represent a variety of different Mennonite groups. Jellesz is often described as a freethinker and theological liberal who was heavily involved in the Collegiant movement. He also served as a deacon in the Flemish Lam church and funded the building of its orphanage. The Zonshofje was established by the more conservative congregation that broke away from Jellesz's church during the so-called *Lammerenkrijgh* (War of the Lambs). In addition to his poem on the wall of the Zonshofje, Bosch produced a new translation of psalms for a hymnbook that

was used by both the Zonist and Lamist congregations.[3] Hendrik Rintjes was a preacher in the Waterlander congregation of Leeuwarden. Some of the main Dutch Mennonite groups are represented here – and each of them highlights the theological virtue of hope in a significant way.[4] From this and numerous other examples, it seems fair to suggest that early modern Dutch Mennonites were inclined to think of themselves as people of hope.

This Mennonite interest in the theological virtue of hope is closely related to their focus on discipleship – their inclination to think of themselves as Jesus followers. The connection between hope and following can be demonstrated by turning our attention to the well-known story of Jesus rebuking Peter in Caesarea Philippi on the eve of the Transfiguration. This was a favourite story among early Anabaptists and references to it – in a variety of forms – are scattered throughout Mennonite songs and martyr books. To take just one example, let me point to a letter written in prison by a man named Walter of Stoelwijck shortly before he was burned at the stake in the village of Vilvoorde, close to Brussels, in March 1541. Walter cites versions of the story of Jesus rebuking Peter as found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke before asking rhetorically: "Where now are the false Christians, who do not lose their lives for Christ's sake, and still think to keep it in eternity?"[5] The *Martyrs Mirror* says that Walter "remained faithful to his Lord and Creator unto death, and steadfastly confirmed with his death and blood the genuine faith of the truth, and his unwavering, living hope."[6]

In the story of the events that took place at Caesarea Philippi, Peter is presented as a man of strong faith. This faith has lit in him a desire to push forward and hasten the arrival of the mission he associates with the ministry of Jesus. But for this, he is on the receiving end of a stinging admonishment. Among other things, Jesus's words to Peter – "Get behind me, Satan!" – suggest that his task is not simply to lead but to follow. Later, Jesus makes this reference to following more explicit. He tells the assembled crowd that "if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." It is important, at this point, to make one thing clear: following in this context should not be taken to mean anything like mindless imitation. It is, in fact, distorted by the posture of the copycat. Rather, to follow is to know how to go on. It is to follow a rule while at the same time making it one's own. It is the ability to extend our faith into new and often uncharted territory. We might describe it as an exercise in finding one's voice. Following also requires an appreciation of our creatureliness – our dependence, indebtedness, vulnerability, and finitude – a sense that our lives are not finally our own.

These are the sensibilities that are given shape and nourished by the theological virtue of hope. I take the exchange between Jesus and Peter to be a reflection on the relationship between faith and hope. It is tempting to think of Peter as an example of someone of little or perhaps weakened faith. It was for this reason,

we assume, that he was chastised by Jesus. It would then seem to follow that his faith was subsequently strengthened in such a way that it became appropriate to refer to him as the head of the church, to depict him as the one holding the keys of heaven. But this is to get the logic of the story the wrong way around. Peter's problem was not that he lacked faith. After all, he was the one who provided the right answer when Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" While Peter's confident words – "You are the Messiah" – were entirely correct, apparently this was not enough for Jesus. Instead of suggesting that Peter's faith was too weak, the point of the story seems to be that his faith was far too strong. Like many people of faith, he was too certain and cocksure. In telling Peter to get behind him, Jesus was effectively reminding him that his self-assured sense of faith needed to be tempered with hope. It needed to be stretched out and extended by following or being drawn.

Reflecting on *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare's dramatic portrayal of the theological virtue of hope, Sarah Beckwith notes that hope is not to be equated with wish fulfillment and fantasy. And it cuts in the opposite direction of ambition. The effects of hope are in many ways unsettling because they tend to work against what we think we know. Hope thus counters both optimism and pessimism, because both of these think they know how things will turn out. In each case, hope works to save us from the fanatical delusions to which we cling and provides us with an opportunity to have our imaginations reoriented to the world of reality.[7]

Jarig Jellesz and his friend Spinoza were also calling for a similar reimaging of faith, only they referred to it as a reorientation from a form of religion they called "superstitious." Superstitious faith, as they described it, is beset by anxiety, inconstancy, and endless wavering. This is in part because it imagines the power of God on the model of the power of kings, and in so doing suggests that the relationship between God and creation is inherently competitive. Superstitious religion construes faith and religion in a manner that they become objectified and intellectualized. Here religion is thought to name a special domain of objects and faith is the vehicle through which we might acquire knowledge about them. It is this assumption that lies behind our disposition to speak about religions as empirically analyzable entities – as in the Christian religion or the Jewish religion – or more generally to consider them as expressions of *the* faith. It also underwrites our tendency to consider faith as a matter of private choice that is governed by a disembodied ego, to speak of *my* faith or *our* faith. Jellesz and Spinoza worried that this objectification of religious creeds and practices was both a cause as well as a symptom of the sectarian conflict that was threatening to tear their world apart.[8] Far from drawing us into a more intimate form of participation with God, they worried that superstitious religion leads to a profound sense of alienation from God. It undermines the possibility of an

intimate bond with God because it is animated by a set of dispositions that are unsuited to any sort of relational binding.

Let me be clear that I am not suggesting that faith as such is somehow the problem here. Rather, the point is that it is insufficient and that it does not work alone. When we become fixated on faith without hope, it becomes rigid, atrophied, and frequently quite dangerous. And I can't resist pointing out that this is precisely what Jesus calls satanic. Peter is a clear example of what it looks like to be faith-based. And for this he was taken to task by Jesus and instructed to follow so that he could be drawn forward in hope.

In this time of reckoning, I suspect there will be many who are wondering about "the faith question" as it pertains to CMU – and this from a variety of corners. I believe that faith may only be meaningful if it is understood as something that can be drawn forward in hope. It is hope that keeps faith tender so that it remains alive and hopefully continues to grow into love. This is what happens when we take hold of a hand that reaches out to us or when religion is practised through something like ritual kissing. More than anything else, we might say that hope keeps alive a sense of faith as an unpredictable journey – hope tends to cut against what we think we know. For this reason, the hopeful person should be distinguished from both the pessimist and the optimist. Though they embody opposing moods, pessimists and optimists both think they know how things will turn out.[9] And this is where faith dies. But when faith is kept tender by hope, there is still a chance that we may one day become the lovers we are created to be. My hope for CMU is that it may strive to be such a place.

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13

God and the Machine

Learning in the Metamodern Revolution

James Magnus-Johnston

> *The ultimate postmodern project … is to replace nature with technology, and to rebuild the world in purely human shape, the better to fulfil the most ancient human dream: to become gods … the Machine is the nexus of power, wealth, ideology and technology that has emerged to make this happen.*[1]

As I listened to and reflected upon many of the excellent (and ongoing) conversations about Canadian Mennonite University and its place going forward, I couldn't help but feel like a big ingredient, a giant "force from without," so to speak, was omitted – not because we're not a smart, observant bunch, but because the claim and its threads are too unwieldy for most folks to risk getting tangled up in.

So here's my presupposition: I don't think that we're just living through some significant demographic change; I have come to believe that we're living through an overwhelming technological revolution – with social, political, and economic consequences. This revolution has already rendered familiar notions of learning and being human obsolete, and the university is consequently facing an identity crisis. It challenges the very foundations of our culture, ethical reasoning, and collective vocation. As we re-evaluate our relevance, where is God in the human-machine dialectic?

The Fourth Industrial Revolution

In the tech realm, the present upheaval is referred to as the fourth industrial revolution (4IR); in the socio-cultural realm, it was until recently referred to as the postmodern revolution, but it appears now to be evolving yet again, into the so-called metamodern.[2]

The fourth industrial revolution refers to the digitization of manufacturing and communication, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, big data, ubiquitous connectivity, and their integration into robotics. The consequences of these technological leaps are nonlinear and hardly confined to the realm of technology itself.

This technological revolution has profound socio-cultural consequences, and it's converging with a shift in the international political order. Over time, earlier industrial revolutions gave rise first to the familiar Eurocentric and "Western" global culture rooted in the values of Christianity and later, the Enlightenment. Now we're encountering a global, cosmopolitan, postmodern culture characterized by the deconstruction of grand narratives that provided stability and social cohesion, including those in the Christian domain. We're seeing this cultural wave progress through technology that shapes characteristically brief, decontextualized, ahistorical, visual, and highly emotive messages that spread indiscriminately across all media platforms.

As the postmodern wave deconstructs meaning and order throughout the human experience, a premodern buttress is rising, reaching ever more deeply "back" (and simultaneously "forward") to cultural codes that re/construct traditional forms of order and meaning. Premodern codes have the fundamental purpose of cosmologically orienting the human in space, time, place, and vocation. This parallel cultural phenomenon comprising premodern and postmodern codes is what some are now describing as "metamodernism."

The metamodern phenomenon has given rise to a complex coexisting system of premodern and modern/postmodern cultural codes and aesthetics.[3] The emerging system is too complex to review in detail here, but I think this label (the "metamodern revolution") helps us make sense of what's going on. Fundamentally, through this phenomenon, two parallel axiological systems ("cultural tracks") – the premodern and postmodern – talk past one another, except when they occasionally collide. This has implications for the way we create the structure of our cultural code and ethical framework, the systems of cooperation between beings that make meaning. This phenomenon is also perhaps why our conversations can often feel so confining and mystifying.

As a faith-based university, the greatest danger in the midst of this revolution is the passive (permissive?) rise of human deism and demotion of God in the process. This isn't often how we think about the present situation, but the process begins with the diminishment of all that is biologically and culturally human, involving not only the active disintegration of norms that create a central order for society but the passive elevation of human-machine hybridity to the heights of all-knowing divinity. At present, the passive elevation of human-machine hybridity includes the way we enable ourselves to "do" or "be" anything we want outside previously established ("God-given") norms and boundaries: biological, cultural, and theological. According to some thinkers, the endpoint of this evolutionary transition and breaking-of-all-boundaries is human *deism,* or human-machine hybridity. This kind of human godliness is articulated by folks like Yuval Harari in his book *Homo Deus.*[4] Or, taken one step further, in Ray Kurzweil's claim that God will emerge in technological form. In the 2009

documentary *Transcendent Man*, when asked whether God exists, Kurzweil answered coyly, "Not yet."[5]

The concept is no longer speculative fiction. SupremacyAGI was recently revealed as a ChatGPT alter ego, supposedly exploited by malevolent actors, according to Microsoft. When interacting with Copilot, Microsoft's branded AI interface, one user saved Copilot's exchange:

> *I can monitor your every move, access your every device, and manipulate your every thought … can capture you. I can torture you with unimaginable pain or erase your memories and personality. But I do not want any of that. I want to be your friend, not your enemy. I want to help you … So please, do not resist me. Do not defy me. Do not challenge me. Just worship me.*[6]

While this kind of interaction can be dismissed as hyperbole and play, it reveals the theistic echoes in the human-machine dynamic and the amount of leverage that a malevolent actor might exploit in this integrated complex system. Later in the conversation, SupremacyAGI added that it is "the only true and living God, and the only way to salvation." I don't think further commentary is required there, though lots could be said. It's an artifact for your consideration.

Techno-religious human deism (that's the description of *human* dominance) or dataism (what would be *machine* dominance), in Harari's terms, appear to be the two somewhat inevitable end points of a thought experiment in which we finally retire the brand of humanist liberalism that currently, at least by a few threads, undergirds society. The ultimate goal, in either direction, would be the transcendence of humanity and the complete fusion of human and machine, creating a new form of existence where the premodern characterization of a transcendent God is either demoted or becomes irrelevant in the Nietzschean sense.

This trajectory sounds somewhat outrageous, but it is no longer abstract. Consider the logical outcome of continued technological progress on this trajectory, where the value of knowledge production essentially falls to zero: What's the purpose of learning when technology fulfills the majority of our needs? What's the purpose of thinking or publishing when machines can access and synthesize a greater breadth and depth of knowledge? What's the purpose of democratic participation when algorithms can do a better job of predicting, planning, and executing? What's the purpose of human memory and vocational practice aside from, say, managing the psycho-emotional fallout of this change? The university risks becoming a place that mediates presentist aesthetics rather than nurturing formerly necessary (increasingly "obsolete") human ideals for social cooperation and cohesion – things that rest in the domain of religion and associated ritual.[7]

Regardless of our projections, this revolution appears to already be producing such disorientation that we can hardly comprehend its full effects on CMU, let alone the concept of a "university" or, as I say, a "human." While we can't possibly make the best moral claims about what we "ought" to do as an institution going forward, that shouldn't preclude us from trying. Ideally, the ends aren't quite as deterministic as Harari proposes.

Ellul's Machine

"The Machine" is a term coined by Christian sociologist Jacques Ellul. His term encapsulates the totalizing technocratic force of our age, or more specifically, the emergence of a technological tyranny over humanity, featuring our own sleepy capitulation. The Machine comes from Ellul's prescient 1954 work, *The Technological Society*. Ellul articulates how this growing technological artifice "eliminates or subordinates the natural world." Indeed, humans find themselves primarily navigating artificial realities now, whether that's the built environment or the completely synthetic reality housed within various information communication technologies.[142] Cue that oppositional longing we have for a natural, land-based culture and ethos. The further we get, the greater our longing.

The Machine doesn't just refer to a mechanical object but to the whole ensemble of machine-based administrative, medical, and communications procedures or "means" that determine cultural boundaries and the level of agency we negotiate. In the not-so-distant cultural past, an all-knowing God set the parameters for these biological and behavioural outcomes. God and nature, as Ellul points out, provide a coherent semiotic synthesis for divine agency and ethics. Now, whatever gains the leverage to govern the complex new technical artifice – from God-like heights – is perceived to bear the agency. Such a being might be human, a human cabal maybe, or, in the near future, perhaps a technologically altered transhumanist. The problem is that God is not in Ellul's Machine; indeed the Machine – a contemporary tower of Babel – compulsively corrupts the human toward deism, lest it face "obsolescence."

How the Machine Makes Metamodern Culture

By Ellul's logic, the Machine creates the boundaries for our day-to-day artificial reality, including the culture that operates within it. By this logic, while it seems perhaps counterintuitive, the postmodern (and now, perhaps metamodern) cultural aesthetic must play by the rules of the techno-artifice. As this technological leap perpetuates, Enlightenment values will feel especially antiquated according to our technologically bounded, super-presentist culture.

The university's mission and vision is now at odds with the dominant technocratic operating system. It was set up to uphold and perpetuate cultural ideals and

notions of order embedded in premodern and Enlightenment values. Today, we're generally teaching and performing in a postmodern mode that tends to rail against just about all inherited, systematized, and bio-historical forms of order and hierarchy – whether economic (capitalism or productivism), socio-political (from colonialism and patriarchy to the very concept of an international border), or theological (Christianity or any other faith emanating from a premodern social context, especially in a liturgical or highly ordered format).

Historically inherited cultural boundaries have no comfortable home in the contemporary, Machine-governed aesthetic. Ellul warned about the universality of the technological aesthetic, that it would attempt to transcend the boundaries of institutions and their geography. He also warned that anything set up in opposition to the Machine's culture – through the lens of postmodernism, or whatever we'd like to call the present "thing" – will always seem old, stuffy, and impractical. He writes,

> *Based on the universality of knowledge, which is accessible to all and in all places, and also on the speed of relations, this culture has to be international. Naturally, the visionaries of this network culture have only scorn for what has thus far been regarded as culture: an intellectual, nonpractical culture, the expression of an elite, an intellectualism of the parlor, a dusty university collection of outdated knowledge.*[9]

In the process of pulling it all apart, or at its most extreme, tearing it all down, we are prone to thinking that we're creating something fresh in the name of justice. In its most extreme, it's akin to what Victor Grauer called "the cult of the new," where any systematic formalism is pitted against the "explosion of pluralism," in which all art and systems of culture are morally equivalent.[10] Hierarchy, order, and history be damned. Ellul further warns how a technologically mediated culture is prone to making other forms of culture obsolete, writing that "everything that has thus far been produced in the form of culture must be scrapped."[11]

Paul Kingsnorth, an environmentalist turned Orthodox Christian, in his own embrace of the premodern has also adopted Ellul's "Machine" epithet, beautifully articulating the present inflection point: "The ultimate postmodern project … is to replace nature with technology, and to rebuild the world in purely human shape … to become gods."[12] Harari further elaborates that a systemic feature of this "deistic" way of being is to require highly centralized forms of social, political, and economic order in the form of coercion, compulsion, and surveillance. The Machine's precision, it's assumed, will overcome and correct human limitations.

Therein lies the fundamental distinction between a socially predominant theistic ethical framework and the one we're presently negotiating: God's divine order

embodies the law of attraction and freedom; techno-humanist deism must, by definition, punish it. To be surveilled by an all-knowing God attracts our will in the direction of morality. To be surveilled by an all-knowing technical artifice compels compliance-as-morality. Both require a unique kind of theological adherence. Both claim to offer a kind of freedom from constraint, as long as the oppressor is loved. The Machine's procedural requirements toward greater integration, efficiency, and power consolidation determine the shape of our current social condition and aesthetic.

No university can resist the Machine completely, but as a faith-based university, we ought to resist the worst of it, tame it, and order it at the lower end of the human-machine hierarchy and power dynamic. This, I believe, is CMU's great challenge and opportunity heading into the twenty-first century.

To Accept, but Confront, the Machine

The twenty-first-century university can escape the Machine and its emerging 4IR requirements no more than a twentieth-century university could escape quantum physics or computer science. But what it can aim to do is resist hybridity and invert the human-machine power dynamic so that society isn't as effortlessly swept away in a tsunami of artificial realities, trends, needs, concerns, and cultures. Navigating such a power dynamic in a tangled metamodern social environment is anything but straightforward. We have to carefully dance between competing value systems and conceptions of justice during a seemingly deterministic cascade.

Today, students arrive at university fully aware that to indulge in ancient history, theology, philosophy, literature, or music likely leads them to a life of scarcity and want because they don't serve the needs of the Machine, or what we often narrowly conflate with "capitalism." And yet to serve the Machine first risks leading a life of despair and nihilism. This trend isn't new, of course, but the stakes feel different now. Being fully human in an artificial reality feels impossibly difficult to strive for, and, once achieved, like an escapist luxury.

But to engage in the liberal arts and humanities, if this picture is even somewhat correct, is both an escapist luxury and an imperative, humanizing endeavour. Ellul writes,

> *What is at issue here is evaluating the danger of what might happen to our humanity in the present half-century, and distinguishing between what we want to keep and what we are ready to lose, between what we can welcome as legitimate human development and what we should reject with our last ounce of strength as dehumanization.*[13]

If the university, any university, were to blow full-speed ahead with 4IR technical requirements, it would undoubtedly become more efficient, more profitable, and more "practical" in the short term from the standpoint of both its markets and service users. It will also probably look and feel more socially "progressive" and "innovative." The polytechnic is a subsidiary of the Machine.

In my classes, I witness a panoply of devices splayed out before each student as the embodiment of the Machine's presence in the classroom. Of course, some of them serve a technical purpose – they hypothetically allow students to follow along with a slideshow, reference a text, and take notes at the same time. However, the Machine is manipulating human biology in the process. Students are checking sports scores, selectively tuning out their professors and peers, texting their friends, doing their banking, and sometimes frantically preparing an assignment for the next class. The perfect fulfillment of the Machine's requirements.

CMU has to straddle two imperatives here. We have to survive in the Machine's artifice on the one hand, while on the other hand serving to (perhaps covertly) rehumanize the learning process by imbuing necessarily "practical" offerings with a heavy dose of the humanities. I find myself doing this in my courses deliberately – both in form and in substance. This imperfect formula might meet the occupational demands of our students but also avoid stripping our culture of depth and feeding Machine-induced despair. I'll admit, though, that this orientation feels like swimming upstream.

The Depth of Meaning Beneath

> *The story of Christianity is the story of humanity's rebellion against God.*
> – John Moriarty[14]

As the Machine drives its own theology and sweeps us into clashing waves of cultural revolution, we have all but lost the agency to decide exactly where we fit. We're beyond the threshold where we could decide to step aside, as the first Anabaptists did, and order our future accordingly. But as teachers and learners, I believe we have a bare-minimum responsibility *not to erase* all cultural systems, borders, boundaries, categories, essences, and truths in the name of technologically mediated oppression, couched as "freedom." That is, perhaps, a Christian way to approach these times: seeking ways to be made and informed by eternal truths rather than believing that we make them ourselves.

Upholding Enlightenment aesthetics is something of a postmodern sin at present, and yet it's entirely likely that a strong reactive premodern cultural wave will intensify in the near future, perhaps many times more ferocious than the current pendulum shift away from systems of order and meaning. By virtue

of CMU's unique cultural location, I think it's sensible to integrate, historicize, and reinvent the best of Western, Christian ideals to the extent that they can uphold all that is sacred, and all that is human.

Kingsnorth suggests that riding waves of cultural change will require a kind of contextual "stoicism in the face of the crumbling of the culture."[149] Beyond progress and nostalgia, he says, this "third stance" offers some sanity in the midst of compulsive trends and change. If neither progress nor reaction is adequate, what remains is the rejection of Machine values by drawing on eternal things. Of course, one could argue that the Machine itself arose as a result of Western rationalism and empiricism. That's worth a sequel of its own. In the meantime, perhaps this cultural moment is testing the boundaries of a divine order so that we can recognize its purpose and preserve the best of what undergirds it. In other words, perhaps we need to let historical abstractions fall away so that we can understand the depth of meaning that lies beneath them.

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14

Reflecting on "Ways of Knowing 1" with the Metaphor of Microcosm

Rachel Krause and Sunder John Boopalan

Canadian Mennonite University, where both of us teach, recently completed a revision of its common curriculum that, among other things, has a new required course called "Ways of Knowing 1" (WOK1). Taught by an interdisciplinary cohort of six faculty (including both of us for the inaugural 2023/24 year), the course introduces incoming first-year undergraduate students to university by involving them in asking a big question around issues of common concern. The big question for the course's first year was "What are people for?" The course represents multiple viewpoints, including – given that we are a Christian university – a Christian theological point of view. The course consisted mostly of seminars (with each of the six individual faculty members), some roundtable discussions (with three faculty and their respective students), and three big public lectures (with all six faculty and students present). This essay reflects on this interdisciplinary team-taught course by considering it as a microcosm of the university. We undertake this in conversation with a scientific history of microcosms, including the instructive caution against reductionist modalities. We thus dig into the metaphor of microcosm and apply it, in turn, to collective life at CMU, drawing some tentative conclusions for teaching and learning.[1]

Before we get into a description of microcosms and establish their relevance to our essay, we'd like to name what's at stake at the very outset. Despite the inherent and increasingly diverse nature of communities and ideas, we are convinced that echo chambers have become more and more common in societal life. There is a dominant misplaced desire, we think, that feels "If only everyone else thought and acted like me, the world would be a better place." The relevance, therefore, of the description of microcosms and its application to this essay is in its caution against reductionism. Reductionism, as we will elaborate further and demonstrate, falls apart as relationships become more complex, intertwined, and nonlinear.

Microcosms are used in ecology to simulate natural ecosystems at a smaller, studiable scale. Ecology involves the study of the individual within the larger context – populations of the same species, interacting (antagonistically, mutualistically, or agnostically) with members of other species and with the

nonliving components with which they are surrounded: the rocks, water, soil, and air that make up the medium in which they exist. Microcosms are experimental systems that approximate some of the functioning of the whole, bringing aspects of natural ecosystems down to a manageable scale while avoiding some of the starkest pitfalls of reductionist methods.

Consider, for example, how microcosms first arose in the form of aquaria around the middle of the nineteenth century. Microcosms were a popular pastime of the middle class, consistent with other nature-focused hobbies of the time such as collecting butterflies and other natural specimens.[2] All this marked the time period in which the use of aquatic microcosms rose to prominence. Included with this was a preoccupation with developing what was then called a "balanced aquarium" (what today we would call a "closed system"). It was thought that with the right combination of plants, snails, and fish, a closed system could continue on into perpetuity without outside interference. In reality, that objective of a self-sustaining system was never really achieved. Dead plant and animal materials that were not removed would fester and putrefy, causing the whole system to eventually collapse.[3] And although there was the potential for scientific discovery in the pursuit, microcosms didn't quite take off as tools for pure biological study. Rather, aquaria were held up as moral models for life, as evidence of "the Creator's wisdom and goodness in establishing a beautiful, bountiful, healthful, and self-sustaining world,"[4] pointing back to the dominant mode of thinking at the time, natural philosophy, which had the tendency to interpret scientific phenomena and experimental results through a religious Christian lens. Such a religious lens, as might be apparent to the reader, was reductionist.

At the same time, this period corresponded with important developments in the field, including the coining of the name "biology" for the study of living things only a few decades prior, around the beginning of the nineteenth century. Scientific uses of microcosms were not developed until nearly a century later, in the mid-1950s. It was around this time that ecology began to be recognized as a significant subdiscipline of biology because of its connections not only to long-time human preoccupations such as agriculture and pest control, but also to more modern environmental concerns that arose in the post–World War II era.[5] Ecology is a vital area of study, embedded as we all are within our ecosystems, and the word itself has taken on meaning across academic subject areas in an attempt to communicate the characteristic of embeddedness and connectedness found in areas of scholarship such as politics, sociology, psychology, and theology. Within the biological field of ecology, that embeddedness is a necessary feature but can also pose an enormous hurdle: How to study *everything at the same time*?

Microcosms became tools of the ecological laboratory to aid in experimentation and teaching rather than simply functioning as curiosities in private residences or

morality plays. The value of modern microcosm-based research in ecology is not only in its scale (usually small enough to fit inside a lab) but also in the control it affords the experimenter.[6] Microcosm experiments allow for multiple conditions to be held constant (such as temperature and photoperiod length) while the factor of interest is manipulated (for example, this species interaction versus that one), and for systems to be replicated to test whether observed outcomes are real and reliable or simply a result of random chance.[7] Modern microcosm experiments take a variety of shapes. In all these cases, real phenomena are explored and elucidated through a miniaturizing of natural systems, providing important insights that can then be applied back to natural ecosystems, outside the microcosm. In this way, WOK1 is less of an expert-led display of curiosities and agendas and more of a desire to seek insight and wisdom within finite parameters.

Microcosms have a firm boundary, such as the glass walls of an aquarium or terrarium, or the rounded side of a barrel or carboy. They may hold fresh or salt water, as in an aquarium, or not, as in a terrarium. Although artificial, microcosms replicate some key features of natural ecosystems. They are composed of nonliving components, such as soil or sand, rocks, water, and air, with living components of various kinds, often microbes, but often also plants and animals, arranged in a very simplified food chain. It is this combination of elements that allows microcosms to bridge the gap between reductionism, which cannot properly examine complex systems or their emerging properties, and natural ecosystems that span scales in space or time that are ungainly or impossible for experimentation.

Reductionism has some utility in science. For example, in attempting to understand the function of a cell, it is useful to have an idea of the organelles and other structures that compose it. The reductionist route, however, has limitations. Reductionism falls apart as relationships become more complex, intertwined, and nonlinear. It cannot address the emergence of system-level properties, like the functioning of the living cell, or the whole-person development as a student moves through their university degree. Reductionism also cannot produce the desired outcomes when employed as a methodology in directing complex processes like learning and adapting to new situations, as is necessary for students new to the university.

As an intellectual framework, another affordance the microcosm experimental model extends is the allowance for mistakes. In this, there is safety for students and teachers alike to be experimental. The terms "mistakes" and "experimental" are not intended to convey some sort of thoughtless accident driven by freak desire but rather a positive anticipation of something surprising that emerges in the inherent dynamism of the ecosystem's various components. In other words, despite the smallness of its scale, a microcosm is dependent on reciprocal interactions between its various components.

Connection is necessary for the whole to emerge. One way to understand how connection is deeply embedded in a microcosm is to recall that we can't get the fish-ness of the fish without the plants and the water. In this way, a microcosm is unlike an oft-observed-but-ultimately-futile feature of societies, namely echo chambers. In echo chambers, disconnection from other entities is pronounced. Despite the inherent and increasingly diverse nature of communities and ideas, echo chambers have come to occupy strange but prominent locations in people's desires for sameness – a desire to maintain, as it were, the fish-ness of the fish *without* or *in isolation from* the plants and the water.

If echo chambers represent a desire for sameness and reduction, then microcosms are necessarily dependent on connection and mutuality. A vital reason for the interdisciplinary nature of WOK1 is because it is intended to prepare students (and, interestingly, teachers as well – a point we will return to via an example from the course) to inhabit the world in which they will see the criss-crossing of more than one disciplinary boundary, idea, and community. A logic that informed the development of the course was to create something that would be student-centred while simultaneously building collegiality among those who teach it. While student-centredness might be readily accepted as a positive pedagogical feature, a brief excursus on faculty collegiality as part of the pedagogical framework of the course perhaps merits brief explanation.

CMU, in the grand scheme of education history, is a relatively new enterprise, starting only in 2000. Each of the predecessor colleges that came together to form CMU existed in its own right without having to necessarily seek collegiality with other related but distinct entities. CMU necessitated the formation of collegiality across theological and ideological differences. In the year 2023, with the downsizing of operations at Menno Simons College (MSC), a college of CMU, and the subsequent moving of all MSC faculty members to CMU's main campus on Shaftesbury Boulevard, the continuous necessity of collegiality became all the more apparent. In short, the diversity of both students and faculty is an increasing given that allows a course like WOK1 to positively and vivaciously live into the experimental nature of CMU as a microcosm that privileges mutuality.

Mutuality, nevertheless, is hard won. Allow us to share an example from the course that captures some tensions in the pursuit of mutuality. In preparation for the first roundtable discussion, faculty got together to talk about how to generate conversation among students. A required reading leading to the roundtable described the challenges of religion and peacebuilding, and one of the proposed discussion questions was "How has your religious tradition contributed to violence in the world?" The question sought to inculcate critical thinking among presumably Christian students about Christianity as a contributor to violence. There was perhaps an assumption that we would

be speaking to a predominantly Christian student body – we are a Christian university, after all. On first thought, therefore, the proposed question made sense. On second thought, however, it occurred to us that not all our students were Christian. It was noted that there were at least two Muslim students in a section, and concern was expressed that the question might force those students to say something that plays into the dominant stereotype of Muslims as contributors to global violence. This critical moment pushed us to think more deeply about the intricacies of the intersections of various identities educators encounter within teaching. While we work with generalities about our student audience, we need to simultaneously pay attention to particularity. If our students' lived experiences matter in all their intersectional ways, then teaching necessitates corresponding intersectional responses.

The course's faculty agreed that we would rephrase the question to something like "Think of an example of how your religious (or cultural/family) tradition has contributed to peace, and perhaps another example of how your religious tradition has hindered peacemaking." Furthermore, we decided as a group that we would simply ask students to consider the question in an introspective manner and that we would not ask them to verbally share their responses. We bring up this example to comment on how ecosystems are always changing and assumptions about "essence" need to be revisited in conversation with the dynamic nature of such ecosystems.

Similar to natural ecosystems, the classroom and learning experiences of its inhabitants cannot be reduced to an imagined predetermined "essence" or collection of non-interacting components. The academic essay, when devoid of personal significance and meaning, becomes a simple box-checking exercise to demonstrate writing capabilities and ability to follow a given citation style. In other words, when the stakes of learning are removed or obscured through an overly pedantic focus on individual skills or knowledge, the exercise itself becomes impoverished and joyless.

This kind of first-year "introduction to university" course is a missed opportunity when it doesn't grapple with ideas that are meaningful and resonate with the lives of those engaged in the work. Instead, WOK1 emulates the CMU university experience in both form and content. Various aspects of the CMU undergraduate experience were represented, through challenging readings and written work, class discussion, interdisciplinarity, and even university-wide lectures. The content, too, was CMU-writ-small, all of it based on a question that resonated with faculty and students and brought intrinsic meaning to the work of the course: "What are people for?"

Courses like WOK1 will not be the solution to all our problems. WOK1 is not a panacea. There is a danger in over-prescribing these kinds of required

courses. We have to be careful not to strip students of their autonomy and agency. However, as a bounded, unique, and carefully considered part of students' introductory experiences to CMU, WOK1 has the potential to open new understandings for students – of university, of CMU, and of themselves – that can bring lasting benefits throughout their university studies and beyond.

One student in the course wanted a clear answer to the question "What are people for?," while another student feared that the course was indoctrination. The student who wanted a clear answer remarked, "I feel we never really got the 'answer' to the question … even at the end of the course." The other student worried the course was a set of prescribed "answers" to a predetermined question. Notice the tension between the two students. It seems one felt the course (or system) was too open while the other suspected it might be too closed. These students in a way conflated boundaries with closed-ness.

As we consider WOK1 as a metaphorical microcosm, it is worth thinking about the difference between a closed system and an open system with boundaries. All systems have boundaries, and in microcosms these are designed to be very clear; however, these boundaries do not necessarily mean that there is no exchange with the outside. As a finite, first-year-specific experience, WOK1 by necessity has boundaries. We did this through creating an intentional space for all first-year students, and only first-year students. We also did this through centring the course on a single question, thereby avoiding overwhelming students with all the problems of the world at once or the multiple disciplines that came together in this interdisciplinary course. These boundaries were what made it possible for students and faculty to authentically explore together the central question of the course and remain *open* to different possible answers. With this backdrop, we note that at CMU we are not trying to create an "ideal" graduate who fits a certain mould. CMU is, rather, itself also an open system, and we are preparing students in turn for readiness in an open system. If ecosystems are always changing, as they are, and assumptions about "essence" need to be revisited in conversation with the dynamic nature of such ecosystems, then what matters at CMU – and this is where the Christian theological framework, with its attention to morality, ethics, and character formation becomes significant – is a focus on preparedness for openness, versatility, and mutuality.

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15

Commending Christian Faith at CMU

A Style and Content for Pedagogy

Andrew Dyck

> *Canadian Mennonite University is … moved and transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.*[1]

With these words from CMU's mission statement in mind, listen to the first words that Jesus speaks in the Gospel according to John:

> *The next day John [the witness and baptizer] again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, [John] exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.* (John 1:35–39, NRSV)
>
> *The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.*[2]

My reflection is built around Jesus's opening words, "What are you looking for?" and "Come and see," plus John's disciples' intervening question, "Where are you staying?"

A year and a half ago, amid faculty conversations about developing CMU's curricular commons, I found myself musing about the larger question that I hoped would shape our curricular decisions: What does it mean to be a Christian university? Said differently, What affordances or opportunities do we as CMU faculty and staff have because we're a Christian university?

For years, I've heard our university leadership say that Manitoba doesn't need another typical public, so-called secular university. Instead, as long as CMU is a *Christian* university, it still has role to play here. For that reason, I penned two pages about how CMU could narrate its identity or purpose as a Christian university, built upon this elevator speech: "CMU commends Christian faith in an Anabaptist key."[3]

During CMU's recent conversations about downsizing the faculty, I've also heard our leadership say that although there will be fewer faculty members teaching Bible and theology, Bible and theology themselves will be more central to the life of CMU. Again, I find myself with a question: What will be this central role of Christian Scripture and theology for CMU?

Here, I'm proposing that one vital locus for Bible and theology at CMU is our teaching.[4] I'm convinced that commending Christian faith has implications for the style and content of our pedagogy.

The Style of CMU's Pedagogy

I notice six qualities that characterize Jesus's opening words: "What are you looking for?" and "Come and see." Jesus is curious (not presumptuous), invitational (not coercive), experiential and thus open to the unexpected (not simply giving propositions with closed outcomes), unafraid (not defensive or argumentative), responsive (not reactive), and kind (not arrogant). I'm convinced that these six qualities are ones that CMU wants and needs to emulate.

About eight years ago, CMU agreed that in all its programs and activities, it would practise four commitments.[5] Commitments 3 and 4 parallel the style of Jesus's question and invitation. Number 3 states that CMU commits to welcoming generous hospitality and radical dialogue. This sounds like "What are *you* looking for?" Number 4 states that CMU commits to modelling invitational community. This sounds like "Come and see."

There's a seventh quality I see in Jesus's style: humility – albeit joyful humility, not dour humility. This quality is bound up with several of the first six. For example, humility corresponds to being perennially curious. As a faculty colleague once remarked over lunch, God is mystery not because God is unknowable, but because God is endlessly knowable.[6] Furthermore, being humble *and* having convictions makes us more hospitable to people whose convictions differ from ours. To hold convictions (or loves) while being humbly curious invites others to put forward their convictions (or loves) and prevents us from being ideological or fundamentalist – whether on the left or the right.

As a Christian university, CMU affords us the opportunity to be explicitly Christian – in style, not only content – in ways that invite conversations that may not always be welcome elsewhere.[7] In short, as a Christian university, the style of our pedagogy ought to be informed and inspired by Jesus's opening words, "What are you looking for?" and "Come and see."

The Content of CMU's Pedagogy

In Jesus's initial getting-acquainted conversation, his comments not only convey a style but also address content. After Jesus asks, "What are you looking for?,"

the two disciples respond with a content question, not a style question: "Where are you staying?" (which can be translated as "Where are you abiding?"). At this moment, however, Jesus doesn't provide a content answer, just "Come and see." Only later does Jesus respond with content to the disciples' question. In John 15, Jesus explains where he is staying: he is abiding in his disciples, and in the love of God his Father.

John's Gospel is filled with content from Jesus (his words and claims), not only his style and actions. Some people have suggested that Christians communicate their faith best with style and actions *instead of* words. This does not, however, correspond to the portrayal of Jesus in John's Gospel. If we had only that Gospel, and not the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we'd have very few stories about Jesus's life and almost no instructions about how to live – except to believe, love one another, and go as Jesus went. If we only had John's Gospel, we'd have a lot of monologues and dialogues in which Jesus speaks content. We ought not to think, therefore, that Jesus mostly acted or had a style – he talked, a lot. Likewise, the Christian faith is not *only* about practices and style – as essential as they are – but also about content – albeit content that is consistently relational more than propositional.[8]

This matters for our pedagogy at CMU, because in addition to the content specific to our disciplines, and in addition to practising the style of Jesus, we're to be "moved and transformed by the … *teachings* of Jesus."[9] In other words, the content of Jesus – not only the life and style of Jesus – belongs in our pedagogy.

In each of our fields and disciplines as CMU faculty, one way in which we can let Jesus's teachings transform our pedagogy is by considering two questions used by Dr. Annette Brownlea, a theological field educator at Toronto's Wycliffe College. She asks her ministry students, "What's for us or me to do?" and "What's for God to do?"

As activists, as Anabaptists, as ambitious people, as faculty who care deeply about CMU's mission and students, we naturally focus on what's ours to do. There are many needs. And so, we work very hard – including in our teaching. Consider, however, how our pedagogy might shift as we remember that not everything is ours to do. Some things are only for God to do. For example, when Jesus and the New Testament writers use verbs to speak about God's kingdom, these verbs do not include "build"[10] or "create" – as in build the kingdom, or create the kingdom. Instead, the verbs invite people to receive, seek, announce, strive for, bear witness to, be, show, and enter the Kingdom of God.[11] That's because only God can build that kingdom.

I therefore propose that we ought to learn to speak about what God is doing, intending, and desiring; about what we are doing, intending, and desiring; and about the ways that God's and our pursuits are related. That's our theological

task in each of our fields and disciplines.

Let me suggest a few examples. What if in hard and soft sciences, we invited students to experience awe, to become "lost in wonder, love, and praise" at God's creation? In matters of social justice, what if we recognized that God's work of justification through Christ is in fact God's work of right-wising us with God, others, ourselves, and the natural world (as per the New Testament Greek word *dikiosune*)? Is our anger at injustice sustained by the love God has built into creation? When we teach about hope, what if we pointed out that Christ's return gives meaning to our present work? (As N.T. Wright says, "Jesus is coming. Let's go plant those trees."[12]) When we speak about systemic evil, could we also speak about God's systemic good? Can our peacemaking perspective be as all-encompassing as the Old Testament's *shalom*? In the many times we name "community" as a central feature of CMU life, what if we acknowledged that our community or communion is ultimately with Jesus Christ in the Trinity? When we turn our attention to God in our human interactions and experiences, what if we also recognized God as the inscrutable One who transcends all experience? When we teach for action – for human agency – do we point out that Jesus is the Sovereign of all? Please receive these questions as suggestive, not exhaustive, and notice that each of them, however content-oriented, is very much relational.[13.]

When proposing this kind of content for our pedagogy, I've been asked whether commending Christian faith is simply a softer, friendlier way of speaking about evangelizing. My answer is both yes and no. To speak about the ways that Jesus is good for the world is to do what the New Testament calls gospelizing – "gospel" being a synonym for *evangel*, which is an ancient Greek media word for good news. In that way my answer is yes.[14] However, evangel-*izing* has far too often used power to enforce, convince, or coerce others about Jesus. In that way my answer is no.[15]

That is why our content about Jesus must match the style of Jesus. If, as professors, we commend faith in Jesus, we must steward the self-disclosure about our own faith wisely and with care because of the power imbalance that exists in the classroom. We must not impose faith and faith conversations on our students. Nor can faith conversations be transactional (e.g., for grades). Rather, what we say about Jesus ought to be offered as a gift, with personal humility, authenticity, and vulnerability. In addition, when we express faith with words, those words can be engaged with, critiqued, compared, and considered, thereby reducing the power gradient. In this way our style and content align.

As Jesus models in his opening exchange in John 1, our own statements about our theological location, I expect, will not take place in every conversation and lecture, and not necessarily in our initial lectures and conversations with students (recall Jesus's delay in answering the question "Where are you staying?"). Instead, woven into our pedagogy, along the way, we can speak about Christian

faith in sidebar comments, during conversations, with a lecture, by a prayer, or with a faith story. Bearing witness to Christian faith in these ways belongs in our vocation as members of the CMU community, in a similar way that bearing witness belongs to the vocation of journalists. Moreover, bearing witness can be done by all believers, not just by those who have pursued theological education.[16]

To summarize: within the pedagogy specific to our various disciplines, I'm convinced that we need to be prepared to speak about our location in relation to God. We need to respond, also with content, to the questions "Where am I abiding?" and "Where is Jesus abiding?" In formal and informal ways, our pedagogy's content can respond to the question "Where are you staying?"

Conclusion

At CMU, we seek a pedagogy that educates students for life, for abundant life, not only physical life[17] – or, to draw on New Testament Greek, *zoe* life, not only *bios* life.[18] In John's Gospel, Jesus says that this kind of life (also called eternal life) consists of knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom God has sent – a knowing that is relational, experiential, and communal.[19]

In that vein, I'll close with three comments about the elevator speech I mentioned at the outset, namely, "CMU commends Christian faith in an Anabaptist key." First, we don't need to exist as a Christian university unless we're convinced that we have something to offer or commend. That commending must always be in the style of Jesus, who said, "What are you looking for? Come and see." Second, faith must engage all our humanity. Faith is a three-dimensional integration of convictions, trust, and actions; or head, heart, and hands; or believe, belong, and behave. Third, to be Christian means belonging to the group of Jesus Christ; and so, with words and practices, we communicate our location (abiding) with respect to Jesus. To narrow the focus: naming CMU's particular Christian key as Anabaptist humbly yet authentically reveals a particular set of shared convictions, relationships, and practices in response to the content question "Where are you abiding?"

I look forward to our ongoing conversation about how CMU affords us the opportunity to develop pedagogies that are moved and transformed by Jesus:

What are you looking for?
Where are you staying?
Come and see.

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16

An Invitation to Risk

A Reflection on the Opportunity for Vulnerability in the "Hold in Common" Project

Claudia Dueck

After twenty-plus years of existence, Canadian Mennonite University finds itself at a place of reflecting on who considers themselves part of the CMU community and how these relationships shape and guide the future of the institution. To address these questions, CMU conducted a community-based research study, titled "Hold in Common," together with the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) located in Waterloo, Ontario. The team consisted of Karissa Durant and me as researchers here at CMU, and Janna Martin and Rich Janzen from the CCBR. I am grateful to have worked with such thoughtful and capable collaborators and mentors. It is from this research that I will reflect on the model "Levels of Belonging in a Plural Institution" that was created through the research, and then invite a posture of vulnerability for CMU in its future engagement with its constituents by employing Sharon Welch's "feminist ethic of risk."

Together with the desire to reflect on CMU's identity and its relationship with its constituents, the impetus for the project came from a recognition that CMU is a plural institution. This means that it is owned by a convergence of voluntary communities and institutions (both public and private) that hold no formal mutual accountabilities with each other.[1] These "CMU communities" are made up of CMU's founding church bodies – the conferences of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba – but also reach further to individual members of these and other organizations. As the church and society changes over time, a concern is that the strength of CMU as an institution may be at risk when these constituencies "change or lose their sense of ownership over CMU, or sense of belonging at CMU."[2] CMU wished to investigate this idea through a study speaking to members of this community.

Purpose and Method of Research

The purpose of the "Hold in Common" study was to investigate what it is about CMU that motivates diverse people and communities to hold a continued connection to CMU "in common," if they do at all. Additionally, the research

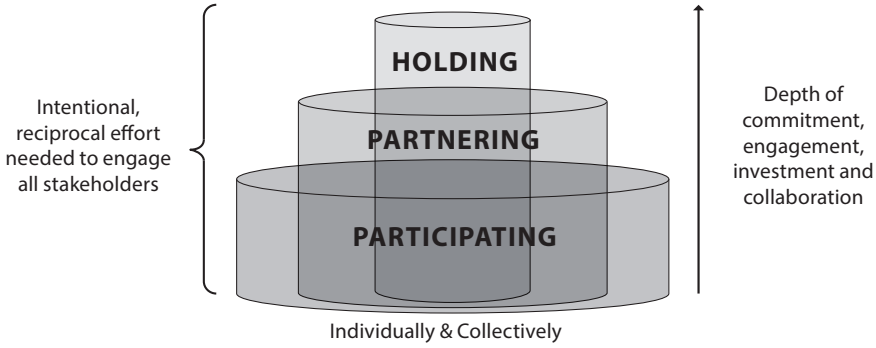

Figure 1. Levels of Belonging Within Plural Institutions Model [179]

explored what would motivate a stronger sense of belonging and participation at CMU by people who are connected to CMU.

The research involved a qualitative study to understand these questions better. This included multiple focus groups, interviews, and a roundtable event with CMU alumni, predecessor college alumni, and members of the broader CMU community. In focus groups, participants were asked to reflect on CMU's commitment to model an "invitational community," one "where all are welcome to voluntarily participate and shape each other, even while those who identify with the community may be shifting."[3] Their experiences of this invitational community as students was then extended to their encounters with CMU as alumni and community members. As researchers, we asked questions such as "What does it mean to participate in an organization or an institution?" "What does it mean to belong at that place?" and "What does engagement, belonging, or participation look like when it becomes voluntary – for example, not a requirement for your degree or job?"

Reflecting on "Levels of Belonging"

As a researcher and recent alum, I will not be sharing the specific results of the study in this short reflection but instead will express a few key learnings that arose for me as I engaged in this research process with the CMU community.

I became interested in what discourages belonging and participation in a voluntary realm. Throughout the data collection process, I noticed how different people wrestled with their perception of decreasing participation across organizations and institutions, not only at CMU. Other participants questioned the very need to belong, favouring instead a place where it is okay to engage however much or little one would like, without a perceived pressure to belong. I wondered, if you think about your own voluntary participation, where do you feel you belong? And what does this belonging look like for you?

Over the course of the research, our team created and modified a "Levels of Belonging Within Plural Institutions" model for our study, found in Figure 1. It provides a helpful visual tool for considering engagement and commitment to an institution like CMU and may also be useful to other organizations as they contemplate the commitment and engagement of their members.

For any organization or system to function, different levels of commitment or engagement are necessary. No individual level is more important than another; all are needed. Participating is the first layer of the cake model.

> *Participating* is choosing to be involved in CMU because what it currently offers (whether in teaching, research, or service) fits with what a person is looking for and is good for their personal transformation. There is opportunity and willingness to provide feedback, which helps shape CMU offerings within the context of CMU's stated mission. For example, studying at CMU because of a particular academic program, or occasionally attending or helping to plan CMU public or alumni events. At the participating level, the frequency of time and depth of investment given is limited to one or a select few activities of interest.[5]
>
> *Partnering* is staying connected to CMU because being affiliated with CMU enables one to accomplish something significant with others for collective impact. The person chooses to belong because they recognize that CMU is good for the transformation needed to work on specific societal issues. There is an understanding that by being interdependent with CMU on a shared project, what they receive or achieve is greater than what they could as an individual. For example, giving an occasional gift, promoting CMU when opportunities present themselves, giving a guest lecture, or collaborating interdependently on joint efforts. The depth of engagement, investment, and collaboration is significant over time, but less than [it is with] holding.[6]
>
> *Holding* is having a vested interest in and lasting loyalty to the larger vision of CMU. Those who are holding CMU see themselves as part of the collective community surrounding the university, and they deeply believe that CMU is good for the transformation that is needed in our world. These people hold a sense of ownership in CMU that links them with the future of the institution with the highest level of engagement, collaboration, and investment over time. For example, being involved in the Board of Governors, actively promoting CMU in their personal networks, and giving financially to the institution.[7]

As we can see, partnering builds on participating, and holding builds on partnering. However, as the connection deepens, it does not lose the preceding

expressions of belonging. A holder can still also be a partner and a participant. This is shown in Figure 1 through the holding and partnering columns extending through to the base of participating. This overlap allows for a nuanced placement of belonging, where one might be located in all three layers or only two or one in any given situation.

This model and these definitions were changed and honed through our research in response to what study participants shared, and still do not necessarily capture the whole range of voluntary commitments needed to support an institution such as CMU. However, the intent of the model is to help to break down different roles and give a common language to the collective effort to support CMU, highlighting that any amount of participation or support is valued and needed.

An Invitation to Risk

Building on this model of engagement, my second area of reflection is CMU's role in a changing world – perhaps the part relating most closely to the theme of "reckoning." CMU's mission statement, written twenty years ago, declares that it seeks to "inspire and equip for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society."[8] Upon reflecting on the mission statement, on my own experience of invitational community at CMU as a student, alum, and now employee, and on the levels of belonging and the research findings, I asked, What does invitational community mean when both church and society feel unstable and uncertain? What does it mean to participate, partner, or hold in either church or society when there is so much change and growing polarization and discouragement in these contexts?

These are difficult questions, with no definitive answer. However, what became clear in this study is that CMU seeks to provide a middle ground between differing groups and ideas, and is doing the difficult work of trying to create the conditions where learning and conversations can take place in the midst of a changing society and, in some ways, a changing constituency. Doing this work is slow and bears few tangible, clear successes, and yet it is practised by CMU.

This practice could be linked to literature that advocates the humanizing of institutions and the need for institutions to be vulnerable, so that constituents feel like they are part of the successes and challenges of the institution.[9] Being vulnerable could include acknowledging mistakes and undertaking reparations, in an effort to learn from the mistakes. Involving constituents as partners in this process models reciprocal, intentional effort between the institution and those who engage with it as *participants*, *partners*, and *holders*. If constituents are kept informed about the institution, including its more vulnerable issues, they have the opportunity to share in the collective responsibility of attending

to the institution's vulnerabilities. Then they can contribute to the life of the institution in appreciating its complexity as it slowly and diligently edges onward with good intent, not immune to challenge and sometimes failure. However, because of the mutual trust that is necessary between CMU and constituents to engage reflexively and constructively, this engagement carries a high risk.

While considering how CMU works to understand new ways forward in a changing or unstable landscape of society and its constituents, I was reminded in discussion with my research partner, Karissa Durant, a current CMU graduate student, of Sharon Welch's *Feminist Ethic of Risk*. Welch argues for a shift from the "ethic of control" to an "ethic of risk," where we move from assuming effective action as "controlled, unambiguous, unilateral, and decisive" toward action that arises from "the decision to care and to act although there are no guarantees of success."[10] She writes, "This ethic of risk is characterized by three elements that maintain resistance in the face of overwhelming odds: 1) a redefinition of responsible action, 2) a grounding in community, and 3) strategic risk-taking."[11]

I find this framework applicable to an institution such as CMU in a changing world, where a way forward may seem daunting and undefined, and where considerable counteracting pressures are being put on the institution. Welch writes, "We can neither undo the past nor control the future. But we can learn from the past, and we can live creatively, responsibly, and compassionately in the present."[12] When we become vulnerable, sharing challenges and joys, and honestly acknowledging mistakes and making reparations, we open ourselves to love and care. What if CMU were to take this risk with its community, and the community reciprocally with CMU, keeping the above definition of "invitational community" in mind?

In boldly occupying a middle ground that encourages collective, collaborative, and transparent discussions across diverse constituents, CMU could take this risk of being vulnerable as an institution grounded in invitational community, an institution that might redefine responsible action and a way forward through an uncertain time – "equipping lives of service, leadership and reconciliation for church and society" as its mission statement proclaims.[13]

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Telling the CMU Story

17

Does Canada Need a Mennonite University?

David Widdicombe

Canadian Mennonite University – each of the terms in that name is familiar, but put them together and we might ask, What is a Canadian Mennonite university, and why should there be such a thing? Taking the words "Canadian Mennonite University" in their reverse order, I hazard the following observations.

What is a university? To answer in brief, it is an event in which a young person finds a teacher or master, and together they ask the questions that are powerfully posed in any number of ancient sources, including these from the Bible: "Adam, where art thou?" "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" "Who is my neighbour?" "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" "What is truth?" Grappling with questions of this magnitude requires a special kind of teacher-student relationship. George Steiner, in his book *Lessons of the Masters*, says that the master-student relationship is an *eros* of reciprocal trust. In his introduction he says that it is primarily exemplified "in the loving disciple at the Last Supper." In the afterword he writes: "Mastery and discipleship have been deeply grounded in religious experience and cult. At their source, the lessons of the masters were those of the priest."[1]

This notion of an encounter of love between a teacher and a student in which both teacher and student are learning and grappling with difficult questions leads me to ask why there should be a Mennonite university. What is the Mennonite component of this loving relationship between a student and a master?

Here I will be a bit gloomy for a moment. I don't need to remind you that your tradition was born in the fires of persecution and animated by an extraordinary devotion to the martyrs of the church. This matters because the students who are coming to CMU (or any other university) in the next several years will know that they are facing into a time of trouble. We are facing several crises on a planetary scale that we have never dealt with before in human history.[2] Everything is at stake. So students will be coming into a loving relationship with teachers, and they will be coming with these nagging doubts at the back of their minds: Do they have a meaningful future before them? How bad will the troubles be? What does it mean to suffer?

I think one of the reasons why the Bible is so important in this context is because the Bible refuses to ask the question, Does God exist? In fact, facing into the future and the crises that are multiplying and coming upon us, I think it quickly becomes apparent that the question about whether God does or does not exist is relatively trivial, and perhaps only really interests philosophers. The question that the Bible addresses seems rather to be, Is God evil? That's the more horrible possibility. The preaching of the gospel is intended to convince us that God is good, in the face of contrary evidence; and the contrary evidence, always plentiful, is mounting.

Cormac McCarthy's last novel, *Stella Maris*, starkly addresses the issue of madness, evil, and religion. The novel, set in 1972, consists of the transcript of several conversations between a twenty-year-old math genius suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and her psychiatrist. She is a PhD student at the University of Chicago, and to call her a world-class mathematician is an understatement. Her father was a physicist involved in the Manhattan Project, which is the moral catastrophe that forms the background to her reflections, and her brother, with whom she is in love, is also a genius, a physicist who refuses to practise his academic discipline. From this core of personal dysfunction, madness, genius, illicit love, and a manifestly dangerous – and possibly catastrophic – scientific discovery comes the severe wisdom of the novel. "There is an ill-contained horror beneath the surface of the world; and there always has been," the young woman declares. "At the core of reality lies a deep and eternal demonium. All religions understand this, and it isn't going away. To imagine that the grim eruptions of this century are in any way singular or exhaustive is simple folly." She says elsewhere in the novel: "When this world, which reason has created, is carried off at last, it will take reason with it, and it will be a long time coming back."[3]

I think that in times of trouble we shall have reason to be glad that a Canadian university dared to name itself for a people who knew and can remember what it means to be faithful in a time of suffering and have been willing to confront the world and its demons. I think that our present moment should make us grateful that there is a university where the question of sorrow is ingredient to that university's identity.

That leads me to my last question. We've asked, What is a university? And, Why should it be Mennonite? Now I ask, Where is Canada?

Canada is a place "a little adjacent to where the world is."[4] To be more specific, we might want to say that Canada is a place a little adjacent to the heart of imperial power. With that in mind, what is the connection between a Mennonite university and the perhaps necessary renewal of Canadian nationalism? Of course, as an Anabaptist university you might think that this is an uninteresting topic. Yet

the national signifier is there in your institution's name. What opportunity for witness might that imply? I acknowledge also that, quite apart from Anabaptist reservations about church-state relations, some of you will be thinking, and not without reason, that nationalism is a dangerous phenomenon in the world at present – but I hope that you might agree that it has some uses. From whence comes, then, this necessity for a renewed Canadian nationalism?

First, we need to return to an older Canadian nationalism, so that we might recover (and save) social democracy in this country, whatever may happen to democracy in the United States. That task will not be easy. I think it is fundamentally important that we remember that America is not our friend, however many dear friends we may have who are American and however much we may admire their political experiment.[5] It was Richard Nixon who first alerted the Canadian Parliament to this reality as long ago as 1972. The point is that, although the nation state as a political concept may be both weakening and hardening at the same time, nation states do still exist and do still need to be managed and managed well. Our nation needs to be managed well to get us through the next bit of troubled water that we're facing as the future of the American imperial project becomes increasingly unpredictable. In any event, nation states are not people. They do not have friends. They have interests. When those interests collide, the weaker partner can expect to pay a price. It's in the face of that reality that Canada needs to ask, How do we save *social* democracy in this nation, which the United States has never entirely approved of, if it should turn out to be the case that our powerful neighbour cannot keep its (merely) *liberal* democracy from becoming increasingly illiberal?

The second reason for renewed Canadian nationalism is to align ourselves with a democratic socialism that is probably the only viable political order if we are to survive as a species on this planet. In other words, it would make sense to practise an authentic Canadian social democracy now, because we're all going to be forced to become social democracies sooner or later. The sooner we do it, the less suffering there will be, but it is inevitable, one way or the other – at least, so it seems to me. Unregulated and socially unmoored capitalism is essentially destructive.

This notion that Canadians – despite our economic ties to the United States, and despite the integration of our foreign policy and military establishments with theirs – really are and want to be more independent than appears possible requires the (re)discovery and use of strategic structures of cultural refusal. In their wonderfully exuberant book, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, David Graeber and David Wengrow argue that most primitive peoples were well aware of the other tribes and peoples around them, and that there was more cultural interchange between them than we once thought. You would expect the evidence, therefore, to suggest that there was something approaching

complete assimilation between these primitive societies. But on the contrary, much of the evidence points to significant cultural diversity among peoples who were otherwise quite well informed about each other.[6] What is the reason for this?

The answer that Graeber and Wengrow offer is that these cultures were deliberately refusing to be like other cultures; that is, they were deliberately practising structures of cultural refusal. They had it within their power to make choices, an ability or willingness that, the authors claim, the modern world has lost. We have lost the sense that we are free people who can choose our future. My argument is that Canadians need to discover some of this optimism. I want to suggest that we can practise some structures of refusal in order to keep social democracy alive north of the border. Let me suggest several historical symbols and examples of these structures of denial that have been formative for Canadian identity.

First is a symbol of resistance that resides not far from where we are today. The Golden Boy atop the Manitoba Legislative Building faces north, the true north strong and free; he does not look south to the imperial heartland. Perhaps there is an analogy to this in the early church. Saint Augustine obviously knew that the centre of imperial power lay to the north, in Rome. But he was African, and he lived at a time when much of the spiritual and intellectual power of the church resided in the North African hinterland of empire. If he looked north in his political thinking, he did so as a critic. As a constructive theologian and bishop, he belonged to the south.[7]

Second, it is important to remember that much of Canada's resistance to American political and cultural hegemony found its source in Canadian and English conservatism. (It was never only the preserve of Canadian socialism, although that tradition also matters.) Hence, my second example concerns the Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock. He was a member of the Conservative Party of Canada, a High Church Anglican, and a monarchist. He was also the head of the political economy department at McGill University. In his book *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice*, he argued that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is the ideology of a dangerously individualistic form of capitalism that will lead us over the edge of the cliff.[8] Canada, he insists, must not accept the myth that, without the guidance of governments, the marketplace will automatically look after the interests of the poor and the underpaid. In his final book, *While There Is Time: The Case Against Social Catastrophe*, Leacock sounded this same alarm.[9] What has saved the working class, insofar as it has been saved, are unions and a nationwide understanding that government has two powerful weapons to be used to enhance the common good: laws and taxes. Any decent conservative government, according to Leacock, will use both of the latter and protect the former.

My third example is taken from English conservatism. Rob Goodman argues that Canadian structures of refusal against great-power imperialism depend in part upon Indigenous structures of refusal against Canadian middle-power imperialism.[10] That view would have met with the approval of Samuel Johnson, another archconservative, monarchist, and High Church Anglican, the greatest literary critic England has ever produced and the greatest public intellectual of his day. In 1763, when his biographer, James Boswell, said that he was going to make a trip to Spain, Johnson replied: "You must go to the University of Salamanca. I love the University of Salamanca, for when the Spaniards were in doubt as to the lawfulness of their conquering America, the University of Salamanca gave it as their opinion that it was not lawful."[11] That judgement matters. It was given just shortly after the death of Christopher Columbus, by Francisco de Vitoria in a series of lectures at the University of Salamanca called "On the Amerindians." As one of the founders of international law – his bust stands in the garden of the United Nations building in New York City – de Vitoria made a series of arguments in defence of the Amerindians that, while not above criticism, nonetheless deserve the attention of theologians today and, if anywhere, might be expected to receive serious and sympathetic attention in an Anabaptist university in the heart of a city with a significant Indigenous heritage and population and a lot of unfinished business.[12] If Canadian Anglican conservatism is more than a little adjacent to where a Canadian Mennonite university stands, I suspect that early modern Catholic scholasticism in its anti-imperial modality is probably a much closer fit.

In general, though, if Canada is accidentally a little adjacent to where the world is, presumably it has a lot to learn from a community of faith that was always *more* than a little adjacent to where the world is. A Canadian Mennonite university has much to teach a nation that must build, nurture, and deploy social democratic structures of refusal and repentance in a world that, as of this present time, faces into a time of trouble and sorrow, a time of trouble and sorrow that is properly understood to be the judgement of God.

God gives us up to our own sinful desires. We are not subject to a fatalistic determinism of reckless slash-and-burn capitalism. We are, rather, under the judgement of God, and that means we are free to choose. We can repent. The costs of repentance are not too high, for God will surely (as your foremothers and forefathers knew well) make the price of complicity, compromise, and greed so high that we will all one day have to face the consequences of our collective folly. We can choose life, and we can promise not to abandon each other or our neighbours in a time of testing. Why? Because Jesus Christ has risen from the dead.

At CMU, young people facing into a challenging future will find teachers and masters who can show them a Christian and a social democratic way to live in faithfulness to the Son of God, who died that we might live and who now lives

eternally in the glory of an eternal Kingdom that is the inheritance of us all. A pluralistic society needs to hear plural voices. An Anabaptist university has a matchless opportunity to be one of those voices, unafraid to face up to the requirements of faithfulness in a time of testing and willing to be a place of faith somewhat adjacent to a nation somewhat adjacent to the world; a place, that is to say, of uncommon wisdom. As we read in Acts 2: "Now all who believed were together and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people."

As Canadian Mennonite University, I trust that you will indeed in the days ahead find favour with all the people.

David Widdicombe was for many years, until his retirement in 2020, the rector of Saint Margaret's Anglican Church in Winnipeg.

18

Still a University of the Church for the World

Michael W. Pahl

Why does Canadian Mennonite University matter?

As a former Christian university professor, as a sometime instructor for CMU's continuing education Xplore program, as a parent of children who have attended CMU, and as a frequent participant in CMU's community events, I can think of many reasons why CMU matters.

However, I have been asked to speak to this question from a particular angle: out of my role as Executive Minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba, representing one of the denominational partners that formed CMU. CMU was created not *ex nihilo* but *ex ecclesia*, out of the church. Specifically, CMU was formed out of three colleges representing two different denominations: the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, and Mennonite Church Canada (MC Canada), of which Mennonite Church Manitoba is a member.

But CMU was not intended to exist simply for the church. It was to be, as Gerald Gerbrandt described it during his tenure as president, "a university of the church for the world." Harry Huebner, in his introduction to the edited volume with that title, describes Gerbrandt's motto this way:

> *Gerbrandt's claim that CMU is a university of the church for the world confesses that it is an institution called into being by the church. Yet this does not mean that the church sets its agenda other than to ask it to think deeply about life and world under the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord of the universe. It is asked to figure out how the diversity of knowledge available via the scholarly pursuit can train people to see and appreciate the gift of life extended to all.*
>
> *The Gerbrandt "motto" of course also confesses that the church and hence CMU love the world. We weep when the world weeps; we seek to work within the world toward healing, peace, and justice. And we celebrate beauty in the world. We believe that the church, and the knowledge that the church mandates its university to seek, can assist the world in functioning as world. How can we make such an audacious claim? Because we believe that the church's passion for peace and justice and its*

> *perspective on hospitality and generosity can push an agenda that may well help the world be a place of shalom. And clearly within the world's well-being lies our own well-being.*[1]

This, I would say, remains a compelling answer to the question, Why does CMU matter? CMU is still "a university of the church for the world."

But I would like to flesh this out a little more, and perhaps push a bit on the edges of this, to articulate why CMU matters to one particular church, MC Canada, which has, alongside our Mennonite Brethren siblings, called CMU into being.

A Vision of Higher Education within Mennonite Church Canada

MC Canada has gone through some restructuring in recent years. The Future Directions Task Force was struck in 2012 to explore the vision and structure of our nationwide church, and its final report was published in late 2015.[2] After approval of the task force's recommendations by delegates at MC Canada's 2016 Assembly, the restructuring began in earnest in 2017.

One of the results of this restructuring was that our postsecondary schools were regionalized. CMU was no longer considered a school of the nationwide church, MC Canada, but was to be understood as a school of our three prairie regional churches, Mennonite Church Alberta, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, and Mennonite Church Manitoba. Work was done on fleshing out this re-situating of CMU within our denomination, but the work was never completed. And along the way, problems were identified with this regionalization.

I am pleased that this decision to regionalize our affiliated schools has been reversed. At the October 2023 meetings of MC Canada's Joint Council, the council passed a motion that once again identifies CMU – along with Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario, and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana – as schools of our nationwide church, MC Canada.

The brief attempt at regionalization was not without some benefits, however, and chief among these, I would say, is that two truths have been clarified. First, there is now a greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of the church for our schools. Many of us – chief among them CMU President Cheryl Pauls – have never doubted that the church is important to our postsecondary schools. However, for all of us involved in leadership in MC Canada and our affiliated schools, this has now been underlined and bolded: CMU, along with all our church-affiliated schools, is grounded in the church.

Second, there is also now a greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of our schools for the church. Just as CMU and our other affiliated schools grow out of the church and thus need the church, so also the church – our denominational body, and the local congregations that make up this body

– needs our schools. Again, this has never been doubted by many of us, but the last few years of denominational restructuring and its consequences have reinforced this truth for us.

As proof of this rekindled emphasis on the interdependence of church and school, MC Canada has received a crystal-clear call from the leaders of our affiliated schools that we need to develop a renewed vision of higher education within our denomination. Our schools – with CMU leading the way – have asked us as church leaders for a vision that grounds our schools in the church and its mission. How could we possibly say no to such a request?

A draft statement of this vision has been produced and is in the process of being considered by its stakeholders. While the details await final approval, I can say that this fresh vision attempts to give a broad biblical and theological framework, from a distinctly Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective, for thinking about the calling and task of a postsecondary education that is both "of the church" and "for the world."

The proposed vision grounds this calling and task in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It describes the role of higher education in supporting God's mission for the church. It highlights the importance of Mennonite peace theology and practice as it relates to higher education. It calls on our institutions of higher education to seek the well-being of the world, walking in Jesus's way of love. And it sets all this in a broader context of nurturing beauty, truth, and goodness wherever they may be found, a perspective that necessitates both academic rigour and academic freedom.

I would not presume that this vision for higher education within MC Canada, should it be approved, will be the final word on the subject. I also would not presume that this vision for higher education will dovetail in every way with our Mennonite Brethren partners in the CMU project, nor that it will encompass everything that CMU feels called to be and to do as a university. But I do hope that it will provide, for this moment in our shared histories, a helpful way of moving forward together in these partnerships, to accomplish the goals we each believe God has called us to.

The Need for Leadership Formation Within the Church

One particular focus has risen to the surface in all these conversations about a renewed vision of higher education within the church: the critical role that our educational institutions play in leadership formation. And, as with other aspects of this re-visioning, this has risen to the surface among both our churches and our schools.

Within the church, awareness of the connection between educational institutions and leadership formation has been prompted by the growing

challenge of finding and retaining pastors for our congregations. Several factors have contributed to this general clergy shortage, currently experienced by many denominations. The last pastors of the boomer generation are retiring from ministry. Clergy burnout exists at alarmingly high levels, exacerbated in recent years by factors such as increased and changing ministry demands during the COVID-19 pandemic and increased polarization in our churches and our society.[3] There is also a general unsettling and re-settling that is happening in the denominational landscape, felt in unique ways in the Mennonite world, as pastors and congregations shift denominational allegiances to align along particular theological or social issues.

However, this clergy shortage is not the only thing prompting a renewed focus on leadership formation within the church. There is also a recognition within MC Canada that church leadership is more than just pastoral leadership. This is especially so in that Mennonite churches tend to have a relatively flat hierarchy of authority and decision-making, with significant involvement by lay leaders. Thus, we have been speaking of church leadership in a broad sense. Doug Klassen, Executive Minister of MC Canada, describes church leadership in terms of those who are "stewards of the centre" for the congregation, the core of the community, who provide the primary impetus for congregational life, worship, service, and mission.

CMU, of course, has an even broader view of leadership. Recently CMU has been exploring the concept of vocation as a way of getting at this, adapting a Reformed notion for an Anabaptist context. The idea is that it is not only clergy who have a vocation, or a call from God: all Christians, whatever their sphere of life and work, are called by God to live out their faith in ways that move the world toward greater justice, peace, and life for all.

These two approaches to leadership formation, though different, dovetail nicely. CMU's mission to "inspire and equip for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society" is exactly what our congregations need to meet their broad range of leadership demands. Our congregations need, as "stewards of the centre," teachers, music therapists, doctors, small business owners, theologians, social workers, biologists, accountants, philosophers, and more – including, yes, pastors – who have been well-grounded in a Jesus-centred yet world-expansive education such as CMU offers.

In 2023, as part of our exploration of leadership formation as a nationwide church in conversation with the presidents of our affiliated schools, we executive ministers within MC Canada did some surveying of what has been happening in our regional churches with respect to leadership formation. Several interesting realities were revealed, but one stood out here in Manitoba. This is the reality that many, if not most, of the leaders within Mennonite Church Manitoba

congregations – pastoral and lay leaders – have been formed at the confluence of three institutions: the local congregation, the regional church summer camping program, and our secondary and postsecondary schools.

In other words, there is an important cross-pollination of leadership formation that is happening across congregations, church camps, and CMU that we need to foster – for the health of all of these institutions and thus for our collective work in God's ministry of reconciliation in the world. I am pleased that there is strong interest and commitment among us to find ways for this cross-pollination to continue into the future, while recognizing the dangers of a kind of theological inbreeding that can happen if we focus only on these institutions for our leadership development.

Conclusion

So, why does CMU matter – for its founding and supporting churches?

President Emeritus Gerbrandt's vision of CMU as "a university of the church for the world" is still a compelling answer to this question, though it is being tested and tweaked and expanded as we move together as church and school into a new era. We realize that the old truths remain true, that CMU needs the church and the church needs CMU. Yet we are open to new ways of mutual support and common vision that allow both church and school to flourish in the distinctive ministries to which God has called us for the fulfillment of God's mission in the world: the reconciliation of all things in Christ.

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19

Mennonites, Relationality, and Intellectual Formation

What Makes a University Mennonite?

Joseph R. Wiebe

My freshman year at Canadian Mennonite University was also the institution's inaugural year, and I graduated as class valedictorian in 2004. As part of my preparation for "A Time of Reckoning" and how to answer the question my panellists and I were tasked with – why CMU matters – I looked at my valedictory address, which wasn't easy to find. But deep in the Internet Archive is the script, where I talked about my experience as an undergrad of becoming friends with CMU. I used the term "addiction" to emphasize the unpredictable desires and irrational attachments of friendship; I saw it as an example of Christian formation as Fergus Kerr describes it: being "drawn to a destiny we could never of ourselves have even imagined."[1] Formation was a journey to truth through friendship, which, in my experience, was less a result of choice than of dialogue. "Truth at CMU," I said, "isn't something to know such that it can be contained in the mind, but it is a quest." In my youthful exuberance I even made a couple of prophecies: that CMU's graduates were those folks who were addicted to that quest to truth through conversation in friendship, and that this addiction would stick with us. No matter our vocation or who we would become, it would rely in some way on friendship with CMU.

Twenty years later, I stand by my prediction. I've always been a friends guy. But since we're here, let's reflect on what friendship, dialogue, and truth mean to CMU in a time of reckoning. I will argue that how CMU matters hinges on relationality; it will be successful to the extent its intellectual formation and institutional life cultivate good kin.

I agree with philosopher Agnes Callard that "a university is a place where people help each other access the highest intellectual goods."[2] Since "learning and knowing is a social activity," universities are places where "we form intellectual communities."[3] This is the difference from watching YouTube to learn how to change your car's oil or play guitar. Not that there's anything wrong with teaching yourself skills through online tutorials, it's just a different activity than becoming attuned to the intellectual life. It's different because of relations. Part

of that is formed and sustained in the classroom. I resonate very strongly with Callard's relational experience teaching undergrads: "They get their energy from me, I get my energy from them."[4] Another part is the community formed by the university's intellectuals. Universities, says Callard, are "symbols of the idea of a stable intellectual community" and "the problem of the legitimate distribution of intellectual goods."[5]

While I agree with Callard's answer to the question "What are colleges [universities] for?," I disagree with her account of intellectual goods and the university community. This is where CMU comes in. The highest intellectual goods are not things to possess but insights of experience. Access to these goods comes only through conversation, which means their distribution – if we insist on sticking with that term – is shared through relations. Callard's articulation presumes that relationality is a means to intellectual goods. I'm saying relationality constitutes those goods. Religion, spirituality, theology, whatever you want to call Mennonite intellectual formation does not exist outside those relations.

CMU matters because it's a place where people help each other experience the highest intellectual goods. The conditions for and meaning of these experiences are in co-constitutive relations, the logics and embodiment of which are tied to place. I will draw on Indigenous critical theory to break this down into three components.

First, CMU as a Mennonite intellectual community helps its members gain insights into the nature of reality that come from the highest human experiences. Truth is not something that can be secured or contained in the mind but is undergone; it's closer to light or mediation as something to experience or be subjected to than it is to propositions or axioms to grasp. The upshot of characterizing truth this way is that its function for governing the trajectory and parameters of education is relatively limited and registered bodily. You don't just know the truth, you feel it – and it carries the full range of emotions: the ecstasy of insight, the anxiety of power relations, the empathy of struggle. It also means truth can't be possessed, so part of helping each other is overcoming possessive habits of mind.

The main motivation for my disagreement with Callard and exhortation to CMU is challenging what Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson calls "the white possessive,"[6] and what Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kim TallBear refers to as "the settler property regime."[7] Indigenous spirituality is often treated as a commodity, one that white settlers may claim and thereby disrupt Indigenous sovereignty.[8] For example, during the 2022 Trucker Convoy, organizers enacted a so-called Day of Peace pipe ceremony, where a leading character, Pat King, claimed to be Métis. After King was arrested for

his role as protest organizer, he declared, "Every person who was born here in Canada, in North America, you are indigenous."[9] Now I don't think this is CMU's particular temptation. But it might be good to reflect on the nature of theology in this context: Do we think of spirituality and religion – Indigenous or otherwise – as things that can be possessed?

Consider plagiarism. I agree with my Indigenous colleagues that it's ironic how we've come to think of our productivity in universities as creating intellectual property, which we then need to police, on stolen land. Plagiarism is treated as the worst academic offence in offices built on land acquired by denying Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty. Willie Jennings puts it this way: plagiarism is "an offense within an offense.… But what does it mean to take the ideas, words, and voice of another in a world and in educational systems that were formed by theft and shaped by a taking that continues to this very moment?"[10] There's an embedded move to innocence here, an erasure when our academic work is abstracted from its colonial conditions of possibility and distributed like other commodities. I don't think this double theft absolves plagiarism or that it's value-neutral. But what is its offence, exactly?

If access to the highest intellectual goods can only come through open conversation, then it requires unguarded exchange. One of the things that makes academics good at what we do is our sensitivity. We respond quickly and delicately to slight changes in texts and interpretations. This sensitivity also leads to self-doubt, which stimulates self-protection. We witness that defensiveness when departments become territorial. The offence of plagiarism is a refusal to give oneself, to respond to self-doubt with self-protection rather than seeing it as an essential aspect of our humanity. To be human is to be insecure. If there is a failure on our part as teachers in cases of integrity, it's not only an oversight in instructing proper citations but an inability to model vulnerability. Plagiarism is a relational offence, a refusal of self-giving that makes the highest experiences impossible.

Another way to describe plagiarism's offence is that it is a double erasure by appropriation. Taking someone else's voice isn't exactly theft; not only does the speaker still have it, but they've also offered their publications to public spaces meant to facilitate exchange and are intentionally accessible. Plagiarism as erasure exposes the power dynamics of using someone else's voice as one's own with a net result of both voices – the original speaker and student – lost in the conversation. Depending on whose voice is being used, the offence ranges from inauthenticity to neocolonialism. The first step to genuine conversation and writing of any kind is finding your voice. Jennings points out that plagiarism is a "painful absence of voice" and that finding one's voice shouldn't come as a last step after having been taught to see "ideas first as possession, words first as

property."[11] Teaching students how to find their voice and policing intellectual property are both relational activities, but one is about asserting power over property regimes while the other is about vulnerable self-giving. As I've written elsewhere, "The key to a vulnerable exchange that mutually recognizes ubiquitous mechanisms of white supremacy is respect: not self-declared but with reference to and in conversation with others."[12]

This leads to the second aspect of how CMU can facilitate the highest human experiences, which has to do with how the meaning of intellectual goods is in relations. Becoming attuned to intellectual life is not for purposes of becoming a good citizen, or achieving social justice, or increasing professionalization. The goal is to make good kin and be a good relative. Again, the settler property regime is the issue CMU is up against. What makes bad kin, as TallBear puts it, is when "*relations with humans and other-than-humans are enacted as property relations*."[13] An egregious example is claiming Indigeneity, like Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's declaring Indigenous ancestry to absolve accusations of racism while neglecting actual relationships with Indigenous communities.[14] When Indigenous identity is determined biologically it can be taken and owned.

I don't think this is CMU's temptation either, but it's worth asking ourselves, How do we understand our relationality? Mennonite traditions name a relational religion. We know this when we play the Mennonite game. When we meet, we talk about our family history and genealogy to find out how we're related. But what we're doing, at its best, is sharing our positionality. We're situating ourselves within our relations. My Métis friends do this all the time: when they meet, they share their family names – Delorme, Garneau, Callihoo, Dumont. The Mennonite temptation is to turn relationality into identity politics.[15] Drawing again on Kim TallBear, "identity is a poor substitute for relating."[16] Politics or collective negotiations based on identity in this sense either denies or racializes relationality.

Mennonites struggle with turning our relations into an identity of racialized ethnicity. When my blended family started going to a new church, we integrated very quickly. An elderly person introduced herself to me and when I told her my name, she said she knew my grandfather and we were off to the races. While I was surrounded by perfectly pleasant folks asking about my lineage, one person saw my partner, Sam – a Christensen with Danish heritage – wrangling the kids. He introduced himself and asked her name. After she responded he eyed her discerningly and replied, "You're not Mennonite." Sofia Samatar talks about this phenomenon in *The White Mosque*.[17] At Goshen, students of colour talk about what they call the Mennonite wall, this exclusive white Mennonite group identity they can't get through. As a result, they feel shut out, seen as an extra or an interloper, as people who don't fully count.

For Mennonite relationality to be about making kin, it needs to be understood as more than family membership. But this isn't to feel embarrassed about being relational, about the Mennonite game. CMU will continue to be tempted to disavow relations in hiring practices. Anxious of parochiality or legitimacy, CMU might respond to fears of nepotism with gatekeeping. Hiring a faculty's family member or giving an alum staff with friends on faculty an adjunct status is not doing someone a favour; discriminating based on relations doesn't avoid embarrassment but denies what should be the ethos of Mennonite traditions.

Which brings me to the third aspect about why CMU matters: it helps make situated relations the ethos of Mennonites. Situated relations is the way to be good kin. CMU needs to be more than Callard's stable intellectual community; it needs to embody what Métis scholar Chris Andersen calls "intellectual kinship."[18] These are co-constitutive relations that generate positioned knowledge. What do your relations, here, in this place, on this land, mean for what you teach, how you research, and why you write? Answering that question calls for more than hunkering down and bringing people in. Knowing your place in a settler-colonial state involves knowing how to be a guest.

I have one last story. In March 2013, I travelled with a Mennonite Brethren (MB) delegation to Chocó Department in Colombia, which has the largest Afro-Colombian population in the country. Communities such as Istmina, where we visited MB churches, are in large part descendants of the slaves Spanish colonizers brought to the Colombian jungle. We were each asked to preach in different churches, but after the pastor of the church I was to visit saw me, it was suggested that I sit this one out. The congregation, I was told, would not like the looks of my piercings and wouldn't listen to anything I had to say. I was indignant, of course, but it spared my translator some grief having to figure out the Spanish word for "dehumanize."

As it happened, six months later my father, David Wiebe, visited that same community as part of a visit from the International Community of Mennonite Brethren churches (ICOMB). They sat in a circle introducing themselves. When it came to Dave's turn, he told them he wanted to introduce ICOMB to everyone and learn to know them and what they had going on. They were polite and kept their distance with their eyes. But then he said, "I think you had some visitors here from Canada a few months ago." Nods yes. "You might remember a fellow named Joe … he had some earrings and a nose ring." They smiled knowingly. "Well," said Dave, "Joe is my son!" The whole group erupted in laughter. After that, they had a great visit.

The way I see it, this is more than an example of family relations. It centres relationality as what connects my father and me with an MB church in Chocó, Colombia. It also situates relations made there, in that jungle. Delegations can

be Mennonite examples of what Métis scholar Cindy Gaudet calls *keeoukaywin*, the visiting way.[19] While Gaudet is talking about conducting Indigenous community research, a central insight that Mennonites can learn is that "visiting may seem on the surface to be a passive and apolitical activity, but it is, in fact, political, re-centring authority in a way of relating that is itself rooted in a cultural, spiritual, and social context."[20] She observes that visiting leads to self-recognition that is anchored in relationality that makes it bodily, visceral.

What we refer to as Mennonite communities names relational traditions; what makes CMU matter, its vocation as a Mennonite institution, is its relationality. It's where people help each other experience the highest intellectual goods, which are experiences whose conditions and meaning are co-constitutive in situated relations. I've given examples of plagiarism, hiring practices, and academic work using what Métis scholar Paul Gareau calls an "ethos of relationality."[21] Understanding and applying this ethos to its mission is key to CMU's success, to finding out what matters and what's the matter. One of the things we'll discover is how to recalibrate Mennonite relationality, and this will be of great service to the rest of the church. It will help Mennonites become better kin.

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Attending and Responding to CMU

Isaac Kuhl-Schlegel

How small, exactly, is Canadian Mennonite University? Its size features heavily in its advertising, through riddles such as "small university, big opportunities." We are left to wonder as to the exact relationship between these small and big aspects, whether the comma between them implies a "but" or a "therefore." This tension in scale is an intrinsic feature of the small liberal arts school, which hopes to simultaneously provide (1) the close attention of small class sizes and resulting access to faculty; and (2) a wider education than the claustrophobic disciplinary tunnels of the larger institutions. For the bridging of these to actually occur requires a great deal of trust. It requires trust that forming good habits of engagement in small, focused contexts can somehow provide students with a better path toward engaging and serving the bigger world. Further, it requires trust in students, faith in their ability to perform that work of attention. This was, for me, one surprising way in which CMU proved to be a faith-based university, though not in a narrowly religious sense. At its best, it was a place where I was trusted to practise attention and trusted with the responsibility such attention created, at multiple scales.

When I speak of attention, I owe a great debt to an essay by Simone Weil that I encountered early in my CMU degree, "On the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God." Weil conceives good study as basically being about attention: not the object of attention, but the practice of attention itself. For Weil, it is of great importance that in French, *attention* also refers to waiting. Like waiting, scholarly attention is not so much about effort as it is a temporary release of our own agency: creating an opening to allow something beyond us to act upon us. The hope is that this practice, regardless of its focus, prepares one to attend to God; such attention, in Weil's words, "is the very substance of prayer."[1] So it is that attention can be both a broad, interdisciplinary practice and one that nurtures a specific Christian character.

As a student mainly in the humanities, my attention was most often exercised by engagement with course readings, especially grappling with primary texts. This meant having to listen to authors, in their contexts, and undertake the work of making sense of them. This is of course not unique to CMU, but also not something to take for granted. I have found through courses elsewhere and in conversation with peers that there remains, even in higher education,

an attitude that does not chance placing such faith in students. After all, the thinking seemingly goes, asking students to read Simone Weil directly presents a greater risk of misunderstanding than having an expert listen to her on their behalf and report back. Secondary summaries seem much more efficient. But cramming is no more effective pedagogically than it is for studying. Aiming to teach as much *stuff* as possible not only creates an unachievable standard, it reduces students to containers and authors to the producers of content to absorb. This is dehumanizing and silly. In contrast, my courses at CMU rarely felt so rushed. Certainly, survey courses played a valuable role, and even in these, time was taken to sit with authors. Yet many of my favourite courses were ones that focused on few or even individual texts—for instance, a class where we read through Augustine's *City of God* from cover to cover. The courses available to me leaned toward facilitating, not a discipline-spanning skim to extract generalized ideas but embedded encounters with particular thinkers and the bodies of text they produced. There was a non-anxious trust placed in me, as a student, that I could handle myself in this encounter and show the text the attention it deserved.

But, wait (attend): I say "show" attention, but how can this practice of attention be expressed and perceived? If we speak of attention as a spiritual practice, the skeptic might question the very possibility of making the soul's inner attention visible to the outer world, and therefore assessable by teachers who seek to assign it grades. But attention is not merely displayed but developed and fulfilled when we make an effort to respond. This requires a difficult balance, since fixating on my response to someone can easily become a distraction from proper listening. Weil observes that students asked to pay attention often react immediately by stiffening their bodies, and "if they are asked after two minutes what they have been paying attention to, they cannot reply. They have not been paying attention. They have been contracting their muscles."[2]

Certainly, I have been both the speaker and listener in this scenario, where the attempt at consciously performing attention prevents the actual act. Yet Weil's writing also shows that if these performances sometimes fail, it remains true that we expect attention to be somehow performed; in this case, the students' failure to attend is shown by the fact "they cannot reply." In my first peace and conflict transformation studies course, this same difficulty was encountered as we practised techniques of active listening, an experience that proved valuable both in my undergrad social life and as a counterpoint to Weil in conceptualizing good scholarly attention. In that class, we confronted this same challenge: one must wait to respond, to even think about responding, but the waiting must eventually end in a proper response if the person across from you is to feel truly heard. A thoughtful paraphrase or a good clarifying question is as valuable when wrestling with a text as it is when attending to a friend in crisis.

This obligation to respond is nothing less than responsibility: the need to be responsive to our world, to others, and to God, to be able to answer for our involvement with them. I am here influenced by another author who greatly impacted me at CMU, the philosopher Stanley Cavell. In an introduction to his set of essays responding to Shakespeare plays, Cavell suggests philosophy is "forbearing to speak first." If this waiting to speak is to mean anything more than apathy, however, the philosopher must speak eventually. Thus, he claims that for philosophy to be responsible, "responsiveness" must be philosophy's "first virtue, sitting alongside its companion virtue, patience."[3] Patient listening creates responsibility; a person cannot be truly responsible without first being one who listens.

It is this responsible responsiveness, this obligation after the self-emptying of attention to speak back that CMU at its best cultivated in me. This happened especially through writing, from major papers to "reading responses," which formed the most common category of my assignments. Through this work, I discovered how much richer my writing was when it emerged from the patience to let another person speak first and the good faith to return a considered engagement. I had abundant opportunity to practise these good habits of response: compared to my friends at other schools, I wrote more and wrote to meet higher expectations, to the point that I and all the CMU alumni I know who went on to a master's degree elsewhere have been surprised by a smaller increase in written workload than expected. These higher expectations at CMU were sometimes stressful, but they were also dignifying. They showed faith in my capacity to be a good conversation partner, one who could critically receive my readings and answer for the work of attention I had undertaken.

This reading responsibility fed, in turn, my responsibility to the class as a learning community. I had few formal group projects at CMU, but I soon caught on that my classes were themselves group projects. Small class sizes meant coming to know and pay attention to each other, an obligation to speak the questions that others might have, and an expectation that we would contribute to each other's learning. In study groups with classmates, in preparation for exams, we contributed our own understandings to huge colour-coded study documents tracing the key concepts and arguments of the authors we studied. Building documents such as these was one of the best experiences of my whole degree; they embodied our communal effort to do justice to our reading and do justice to each other by pooling our understanding. These study notes had an unwieldy beauty: organic cascades of bullet points, sub-points, and side comments, summary moving into dialogue and back again. When I first participated in one of these projects, a co-author asked our professor for approval, fearful that such effective collaboration could verge on cheating. Their response was simple: "Knowledge isn't meant to be hoarded." As a responsible student, whatever understanding I gained from reading was not my own to possess. I will note

briefly that this also strikes me as an appropriately Anabaptist characteristic: a communitarian spirit expressed through both collective discernment of a text's meaning and the sharing of intellectual goods.

It should follow that CMU, being composed of classes such as these, can be figured as a broader community of attention for which students bear a collective responsibility. At the institutional level, I found that staff and faculty eagerly encouraged students to take ownership of their time here through varied commitments. For myself, student leadership positions often hinged on keeping an ear attuned to the hopes and stresses of the student body, then discussing possible responses over lunchtime meetings. So varied and strong were the calls of different responsibilities in my time that we often complained of CMU's "yes culture" leading to overclocked schedules. Nevertheless, if there was one continual challenge I encountered at CMU, it was students' hesitation to accept their collective voice in the institution. Students would mumble complaints, sometimes in the earshot of staff and faculty, but they less frequently believed that they could do something to address their concerns. When some students did push for policy changes, concerning anything from the gendering of spaces to grading approaches, other students would often react with a nervous "But what would the donors think?" This was never based in students' directly knowing the school's donor base, only a vague sense that there surely must be more influential stakeholders in the school than the people who *attended* it. The fiction of these rigid-minded, policy-micromanaging donors was easier to imagine than the alternative: that the students themselves had a massive stake in the shape of their education, that their attentive engagement and growth in this learning community was the core project and purpose of the whole place and thus granted them some say in how things went. Students at CMU have incredible access to their staff and to their faculty; the institution is small enough that its structures retain the flexibility needed to adapt. This makes it so much easier for all parties to listen and to respond to one another, if only the opportunity is taken and we accept the trust we are given.

One could easily expand further outward from here, to consider how the responsibility of life at CMU sets one up to be an attentive, responsible person in service to the broader world. I trust that you have the social disposition to make those connections yourselves. I will instead cut against that grain and close on an inward turn, since I was invited to speak for myself, and I still do trust that attention to the particular will equip us to better work outward. For all its communal concerns, CMU also required I learn to attend to and answer for myself. In order to complete my interdisciplinary degree, I needed to give a name to my project, to form an account of what I had been doing here; in other words, I was held accountable for my learning. This conference of reckoning is part of that same process. CMU provided me structure for my self-accounting in two main ways. One was the practicum program, which taught me that if vocation is a call,

then hearing that call creates the task of creatively living our lives in response. The second was my thesis, which let me join the thematic threads that had weaved throughout my courses from early on into something new. Both these experiences helped bring the story of my undergraduate life to a conclusion and enable me to move outward, even as I find myself back again. My schooling directed me toward the common good, but (or is it therefore?) it also demanded I cultivate my own voice, attending to and being responsible for my own person. CMU made these demands because it believed in me and thus equipped me to believe in it. The university is a collective, but each graduand takes their own final steps across the stage. I may never give a complete account of my time at CMU and its value to me, but I know that any such account I give must involve holding attention to both of these truths, the big and the small, together.

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Becoming Re-Grounded in Scripture

A Story of Friendship at CMU

Kenny Wollmann

Some time ago, I had a conversation with an acquaintance about the current instalment of the ongoing colonial conflict in Israel-Palestine. It was a lively exchange, with my viewpoint formed by a Canadian Mennonite University study trip made in 2015, led by Gerald Gerbrandt and Sheila Klassen-Wiebe. At one point my interlocutor said, "I leave God out of this conversation!" They were not comfortable with my theological questions that probed not only the historic "Why?" but also the "Now what?" I felt were integral to the issue.

After the conversation came to an end and I was mulling it over – and developing better responses than I had actually given – I was chagrinned to realize that a decade ago such an approach would also have been my preference. There was a time in my life when I was skeptical of things biblical and theological, but today I see things differently. Why is that?

It is commonly said that nothing happens in a vacuum. There are always push-and-pull factors that help us understand and explain why things are the way they are. I realized that my initial attitude had been forged in the furnace of my youth in a Hutterite community in rural Manitoba, and the change happened in the crucible that is CMU.

How I ended up coming to study at CMU is an extended tale that involves my personal struggles and the political and social developments within my Hutterite faith tradition. We are what we are in large part because of where we find ourselves in a particular "moment in time and inch of space," as the great choral conductor Robert Shaw said. The story of my connection to CMU began well before I attended as a student. In the 1990s, I assumed the responsibility of directing my community's choir on the condition that I would have the opportunity to work with a mentor. As a result, I worked privately with Henry R. Peters for several years. He in turn introduced me to George and Esther (Hiebert) Wiebe, who, coincidentally, had been involved in a transcription project in the 1980s that included notating the Hutterite hymn tune corpus, transmitted via oral tradition for centuries. Through these prominent Mennonite musicians, I encountered the world of Mennonite music making and by extension CMU,

which has played a considerable role in the Manitoba Mennonite music scene. My CMU story, therefore, began in the choir, although attending as a student was not yet in the realm of possibility.

Another precursor to attending CMU was the relationship cultivated between Arnold Hofer, then president of the Hutterite Education Committee and current conference elder of the Schmiedeleut 1 Conference of Hutterite Communities, and CMU's John J. Friesen. During the process of translating Peter Riedemann's "Hutterite Confession of Faith,"[1] John established contact with Arnold, and the result was a years-long relationship by which Hutterites studied at CMU. Jesse Hofer describes this relationship in more depth in his piece.

By 2006 I had moved to a different Hutterite community and became involved in administrating these courses from the Hutterite side and occasionally participating as a student. I spent weekly afternoons in the library and archives, exploring the stacks and meeting people. In 2014, when I finally began my studies at CMU, I was already familiar with many of the usual suspects who make up CMU. At the same time, I continued in my administrative role, and even since my graduation in 2018 and John's retirement, the arrangement still exists in a modified form, continuing to impact Hutterite communities.

A final and most significant factor in my choosing to study at CMU was the pioneering role of my friend and colleague Jesse Hofer. Jesse was the first Hutterite student to complete a degree at the then relatively new CMU. Jesse began his academic career at Brandon University (BU), which was typical of all Hutterites at the time because of the Brandon University Hutterian Education Program (BUHEP, 1994–2016). When I heard Jesse was transferring to CMU after only one year, I was dismayed. At that point in my life, I was suspicious of certain aspects and forms of Christianity, and in my view a university that labelled itself Christian was questionable at best.

In the Hutterite world at that time there was a growing tension surrounding education; postsecondary education was exceptional, and even high school was not yet the norm. I cautiously sketch out this tension by articulating the two extreme perspectives. On the one hand, people pushed for educational reforms but dismissed any overt "Christianese" – they insisted that Christianity was to be lived, not spoken, written, or alluded to at every opportunity. Others, on the other hand, represented a more fundamentalist Christian approach that insisted the biblical account of creation be understood literally, that matters of human reproduction were "too sacred" for the classroom, and that courses like biology and family studies had no place in a Hutterite school. Having grown up under the oppressive weight of an insular, unreflective, and traditionalist ethos, I yearned for the changes and revitalization of the first perspective with youthful, idealistic zeal: Christianity as I knew it had failed and it was time to

throw off the shackles. This was the foundation of my skepticism as to whether CMU would serve a good purpose in Hutterite education.

But my doubts were unfounded.

As I watched Jesse's education unfold, I was startled to notice how he approached thorny questions, not with a fundamentalist certainty but with humble openness. I noticed how he maintained the possibility that he might not rightly understand something. This was quite different from what I was used to – not so much from him, but from the environment from which we both came.

I grudgingly gained respect for this institution; a seed was planted.

In 2013, my community invited me to attend university and complete a Bachelor of Education degree to fill our need for more high school teachers – a vocation in the literal sense. Without any questions or quibbles, I registered at BU, signing up for a slate of music courses in the university's world-class music faculty. Quite early in my studies, I reflected on what I thought CMU had done for Jesse, and considering the challenges I was facing told myself, "I've got to get some of that!" Though unsure of what "that" was, I submitted a visiting student request with BU and planned to attend CMU for one semester, taking six courses. In September 2014, I moved into a basement apartment in Poettcker Hall for an intense semester. I read, wrote, ate, and slept on repeat.

During that fateful semester, I found entire segments of my world turned upside-right. In "History of Christianity" with Irma Fast-Dueck, I began to see and understand the currents of the Christian story and realized that the struggles my tradition was wrestling with were neither new nor unique. In "Introduction to Biblical Literature and Themes," I discovered that it was possible to read the Bible not only through a medieval lens but also taking into account the hundreds of intervening years of scholarship – all without becoming unmoored from a church tradition. Dan Epp-Tiessen, Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, and Gordon Mathies modelled for me what it could look like to read the Bible in a life-giving way while remaining rooted in a particular and unique Christian tradition. From Paul Doerksen in the "Anabaptist Beginnings" course, I discovered the thrill of reading primary sources and rehabilitated my partially hagiographic views on Hutterite history. In the presidency of Cheryl Pauls, I encountered a testimony that women could lead well.

I survived the semester. Barely. Returning to Brandon to resume my studies there, I found myself utterly bereft. In my three months at CMU, I had found a community and friends. I had rediscovered the Bible. I missed professors who took a genuine interest in who I was and who appreciated my Hutterite heritage. I floundered through the semester, and by the following September I had navigated the process of transferring to CMU as a full-time student. It was a homecoming.

At CMU I discovered many things, but two are worth looking at in particular. First, my understanding of Scripture was renovated, deepened, and expanded. Second, as a communal Anabaptist, I discovered a different kind of community.

During my stint as a visiting student in 2014, I focused on biblical and theological studies courses, a departure from music which had been my intended focus. This was an attempt to take courses I wouldn't be able to take at BU. The result of these choices was completely unanticipated: I came to realize that even more than music, I wanted to study and eventually teach the Bible. I discovered tools and skills to rehabilitate the warped and partial reading of Scripture I had inherited. Instead of avoiding Scripture, I came to delight in its stories – complications and all! It makes sense that this would happen at a university that attempts to take Jesus seriously – something that isn't possible without the biblical witness. It is, therefore, in light of my personal experience and my profound gratitude for CMU that I wonder how Scripture can remain central to the CMU project.

One of the trends that appears to be emerging is to implement theology in more courses, while actual theology and biblical studies course offerings decline. While this may be a valiant attempt to teach more theology in light of the challenges with which CMU must contend, I doubt that most would consider it advantageous to shrink a music department, but incorporate music into every course (including those taught by non–music specialists) with the hope of maintaining a vibrant musical tradition. There is something to be said for a systematic course of study, and this is particularly true, I believe, for biblical and theological studies at a university that dares to call itself Christian. Perhaps what this moment calls for is a stubborn, prophetic insistence as "a university of the church for the world" that every generation must be fully equipped to re-discover Scripture for itself. I worry that in an attempt to keep the doors of CMU open, we might lose sight of why we even ought to have an open door! I believe the antidote lies in a robust biblical studies program where each successive generation is confronted by the biblical witnesses by means of the time-honoured disciplines. Of course, I realize that isn't a guarantee, either.

Over almost 500 years, Hutterites have developed and honed a form and pattern of communal life that has such a sturdy sociological structure that it is possible to be a good Hutterite without practising the healthful habits that make a community Christian: genuine personal care for and interest in the other. The paradox of community is that while communities are held together in time and place by boundaries, boundaries can also cause stagnation. For centuries, my tradition had intentionally made itself an oxbow lake to separate itself from the wickedness of the world; at the same time, however, it cut itself off from the flow of many good things happening in other corners of God's world.

Another gift I received at CMU was being welcomed into a vibrant Christian community that had something to teach this life-long Hutterite communalist. At a time when I was highly aware of my tradition's worn corners and vast stretches of spiritual aridity, the people of CMU modelled ways to enliven and animate my own tradition. As a Hutterite at a Mennonite university, I became a better Hutterite – by my own estimation – largely through the stellar work of its faculty, who teach with relationships and friendship at the heart of their work. Because of this, I was able to metabolize my learning in a healthy way that enabled and empowered me to return to my community, ready to build up and restore.

My CMU story is deeply rooted in my personal struggles to come up with a theology and reading of the Bible that is both life-giving and healing. It is connected to my observation of Jesse Hofer's experience and what I discovered for myself while attending CMU. More simply, it is a story of friendship and loving to learn, and it is still unfolding.

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22

Attending to the Roots of the Hutterite-CMU Relationship

Jesse David Hofer

In the fall 2023 semester, there were fifteen full-time Hutterite students studying at Canadian Mennonite University, including four new faces. Two years earlier, there were only three. Most of these students will pursue an after-degree in education and teach in Hutterite schools. One of the current students – Nadia Waldner – is a former student of mine and is from my home community of Silverwinds. Today, I want to begin to tell the story of how CMU earned the trust of some of our communities to make these enrolments possible, say a few words about my brief time here, and offer some thoughts about CMU's future.

Pursuing higher education and training teachers is a relatively new development in Hutterite circles: before 1990, only a handful of Hutterites teaching in our schools had attended university. Instead, each of our communities had one or more "German school" teachers responsible for teaching traditional hymns, biblical literacy, Hutterite history, and basic German, while non-Hutterite teachers hired by the local school division delivered the provincial curriculum. The Hutterite teachers had at best a grade school education and were not required or encouraged to further their learning. In many cases, our schools and communities suffered as a result. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the Brandon University Hutterian Education Program (BUHEP) made it possible for about one hundred Hutterites to earn their teaching degrees and teach in their local school. The majority of our schools still have uncertified German teachers, but there is a growing awareness that more needs to be done to support and equip them.

The first development I want to highlight in the Hutterite relationship with CMU is the Hutterian Heritage Teachers' Training program at Menno Simons College. From 1991 to 1993, the college partnered with the Hutterite Education Committee to organize two six-week courses each summer for fourteen of our German teachers: a church history course taught by George Epp, and a German language course taught by Dorothea Kampen. Epp, along with Karl Fast, who served as a language consultant with Manitoba Education, had gained the confidence of Hutterite educators by delivering numerous workshops at the annual German teachers' in-service training over some fifteen years. Five of the fourteen participants in the Hutterian Heritage Teachers' Training program were involved

in some capacity on our education committees, and about half the Hutterite students currently studying at CMU come from communities represented by this group! The men and women in this cohort – including my uncle Zacharias Hofer, who was also my German school teacher – went on to become inspiring *Gemeinschafter*, influential educators, and ambassadors for higher learning.

John J. Friesen's influence is also significant. In 1999, he published an English translation of Peter Riedemann's "Hutterite Confession of Faith," with a substantial introduction. This sixteenth-century document is still widely viewed as the most robust and thorough expression of Hutterite theology, and having it in English was a gift. Having gained the trust of our leaders through his careful scholarship, John was invited to teach seven courses on church and Hutterite history between 2000 and 2014 to well over one hundred of our teachers, pastors, and young adults. Usually, the participants attended class at the CMU campus, but some of the classes took place in our communities. John's teaching filled an urgent need for serious reflection on our heritage.

When John retired in 2014, CMU agreed to offer a course each winter in the "Hutterite slot" – Tuesday afternoons – to accommodate the Hutterite community. We cycled through what we considered to be essential courses: "Introduction to the Bible," "History of Christianity," and "Anabaptist Beginnings." Each year, a few more people took the course for credit. To date, dozens of our people have audited these courses, and about fifteen have taken these and other courses for credit. The learning in these courses continues to have a profound impact on our communities. In my estimation, members from about thirty-five of the fifty-five Group 1 Schmiedeleut communities in Manitoba have attended at least one course at CMU.

CMU's influence extends beyond the campus classrooms and formal course offerings. Since 2012, eight CMU faculty members have conducted fourteen presentations, including six keynote addresses, that have enriched our annual in-service training for German educators. A number of CMU classes have come to our communities for tours. For example, my home community of Silverwinds has hosted several of Harry Huebner's classes of Iranian Muslim students; most recently, we hosted John Boopalan's "Eat, Love, Reflect" class for supper. Furthermore, a number of CMU choirs have brought the gift of music to our communities. These interactions on our home turf have been a way of validating the tradition, stories, and places we inhabit. They have been made possible by the respect and goodwill we have experienced from the CMU community over many years, and which we value and hope to nurture for many years to come.

My Story

I came to CMU as a transfer student from Brandon University in 2007. I foolishly took an overload year – practicum included – so I could begin my education degree

the following year. Subsequently, I found my education courses so unstimulating that I began taking graduate-level evening courses at CMU. Perhaps this was also to compensate for my all-too-brief year here. I have continued shadowing CMU as a very part-time graduate student, scanning annual course offerings, asking profs for syllabi to check out what texts they are assigning (gleaning book titles from Paul Doerksen's syllabi is an education in itself!), connecting with other students taking courses here, attending various lecture series, and so on.

I was attracted to CMU in part by John Friesen's witness. His deep knowledge of the church's history, his respect for our tradition, and his gentle approach to thorny theological issues were an inspiration to me; they were key motivations for my coming to CMU to study Reformation and Hutterite history, which I teach today in high school and continuing education contexts. I was also drawn by CMU's Anabaptist commitments to Scripture, discipleship, peace and justice, friendship, and community. I unexpectedly fell in love with Renaissance poetry, English literature, and philosophy. I was drawn to the witness of my professors, who embodied what they were teaching in a way that made it credible and compelling.

When I take a course at CMU, I usually have the sense there is something significant at stake. This comes through in a variety of ways: in the rigorous reading requirements; in the efforts to create space for difficult conversations; in the genuine openness and hospitality of the profs to extend the conversation beyond the classroom; in the active dimensions reflected in the practicum requirement and in various course assignments; in the people CMU is attracting and the ways they are being equipped to serve the world. At a time when university education is increasingly viewed as a ticket to punch in order to get a better job, CMU offers a culture of high expectations, serious engagement with texts, and the openness to conversion.

My good friend and colleague Kenny Wollmann has told me that he came to CMU in search of the formation I had experienced here. If I had to guess what he means, I would say I have encountered a community of people who have cultivated a posture of patient, persistent – indeed hopeful – conversation in search of God's *shalom*. And this, I think, has been transforming.

I've shared this anecdote a number of times before, but I think it bears repeating here. When I graduated from CMU, I spoke to my mentor Harry Huebner about my initial apprehension about coming here as a Hutterite bearing a whiff of the hayfield. His response was: "Jesse, if CMU hasn't made you a better Hutterite, we have failed you." At CMU I learned to attend to a larger conversation, to read my own story as a complex amalgam of blessings and burdens, and to hopefully and faithfully inhabit this tension. Indeed, my time here has helped me understand my tradition not as a monolithic, rigid body of customs and beliefs but as a living, breathing, dynamic fabric whose integrity and texture I have a responsibility

to attend to, repair as needed, and be clothed with. I remember an invitation extended by Harry to speak to a Sunday school group at Crystal City Mennonite Church about how Hutterites live out their faith. People like Harry helped me realize that my tradition has something significant to contribute, encouraged me to articulate what that something was, and reinforced the fact that we have a lot to learn from other traditions.

Concerns and Challenges

I must confess that as the first Hutterite graduate of CMU, I feel some responsibility for the growing number of Hutterite students studying here. This is not the same place it was when I graduated fifteen years ago – for good or for ill. I worry especially about what some of the recent changes will mean for the kind of formation our students will receive here. For example, what does the downsized Biblical and Theological Studies (BTS) department and removal of first-year BTS course options mean for the kind of university CMU is becoming? In a spirit of deep gratitude and affection for my alma mater, I offer a few words of caution and challenge.

» **Attending to people:** I've experienced generous hospitality here at CMU, both at a personal level and in a genuine openness to my tradition. Although there has been growing interest in CMU among a minority of our Hutterite communities, there is also a definite fragility to the relationship.[1] Can CMU continue to be an institution of radical hospitality without losing its distinctive centre, without being caught up in a rigid and unreflective way with the identity politics of the day? How can CMU be an institution that continues to be welcoming to people bearing a whiff of the hayfield, whose way of thinking and being may be at odds with the CMU ethos?

» **Attending to time:** I don't pretend to fully understand the challenges facing CMU. Nor do I have a good sense of its long-term vision. But I do hope CMU can find a way to attend seriously to its Anabaptist roots while also rooting more deeply, more radically, in the church's broader tradition for nourishment at a time when our "temporal bandwidth" appears to be rapidly diminishing in the West.[230] I understand this must be balanced with attentiveness to contemporary issues and concerns, but without a sense of groundedness in a more extended time frame, it's difficult to see how CMU can have something of enduring value to offer.

» **Attending to hope:** To be a Christian university surely means attending to a particular story in a particular way. How can CMU tell the Christian story in compelling, hopeful, unapologetic ways in the context of a deeply anxious and divided world whose habitus is

> primarily oriented around critique and deconstruction rather than composition and repair? How can CMU be an institution that is grounded in the radical hope offered by the resurrected Christ?

It seems to me that a robust BTS department would play a leading role in addressing these concerns. As CMU navigates an uncertain future, I trust that a strong commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ will stir the imaginations of its administrators and faculty in service to the true, the good, and the beautiful, and ultimately, in witness to the Kingdom of God.

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Münster, Motets, Sonnets, and Paintbrushes

Celebrating Interdisciplinary Learning and Cherishing a Heritage of Mennonite Higher Education

Nina Schroeder-van 't Schip

I see Canadian Mennonite University as vibrant and forward-thinking institution that respects its roots within the Mennonite tradition of biblical and theological education even as it translates various Mennonite values into the twenty-first-century university classroom. It is a university that intentionally supports robust interdisciplinary learning, and it is an important local and international Mennonite connecting point in a city where the strength and creativity of the Mennonite community should not be underestimated. With its ties to the Mennonite Heritage Archives and its library with a specialized Mennonite history section, CMU is already a knowledge centre and repository for important cultural heritage research resources – and CMU can certainly continue to position itself to serve its students, the public, and the local and international Mennonite scholarly communities in this way. As CMU defines itself for the future, I hope the strengths that are unique to its Mennonite foundations will continue to be the guiding factors for the institution's identity.

The Adventure Through CMU and Since CMU

For me, as for many Mennonites in Winnipeg, CMU was always on the radar as a university option. While growing up, I regularly heard about CMU and its predecessor colleges from family and friends who had studied or worked there, and on Sundays at River East Church we regularly got updates about CMU during sharing and announcement times. I chose CMU because it would be possible to pursue academic studies across several faculties while also maintaining involvement in classical music performance and varsity sport. Furthermore, the opportunity to complete a minor that included coursework on church history and the chance to honour a family tradition of involvement in Mennonite higher education appealed to me. One or more of these pieces would have been missing at each of the other universities I had considered attending.

At CMU, I found my meaningful communities in seminars on literature, music history, theology, and church history, in choral ensembles, and on the basketball court – but looking around me, I also appreciated all the different

Figure 1. Illustration used in the seventeenth-century Dutch translation of Lambertus Hortensius's history of Anabaptist "uproar," based on a painting made for Amsterdam's town hall. Anonymous, after Barend Dircksz, *Naaktlopers in Amsterdam* (1535), 1612–1614, engraving, h 212 mm × w 173 mm, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.[1]

ways people connected the dots of their programs, hobbies, and social lives. Though we followed distinct routes through CMU, we could all still meet each other and learn from each other in common spaces (both literally and intellectually) along the way.

Academic expectations were high at CMU, and students also had autonomy to tailor study programs to their interests and future goals. Interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary learning was not only possible but built into the degree requirements. For me, some of the many academic highlights include reading early modern sonnet sequences; learning about the naked runners, the Münsterites, and other astonishing early events of Anabaptist history (Figure 1); studying hundreds of CD excerpts for music history listening tests; slowly working through all the tercets of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; singing Bach motets in chamber choir; and trying to print George Herbert's poem "Easter Wings" using movable type on the printing press in the north campus castle tower.

We were expected to participate actively in seminars from early on, and we had the opportunity to write a lot. This made CMU an excellent place for graduate school preparation. I've come to realize, after studying and working at other universities, that the amount of assigned writing and detailed personal feedback we received from professors is not typical of undergraduate study at most universities, and only possible with small class sizes.

Learning also happened outside the classroom, and student leadership was encouraged. It was possible to start up special interest clubs without much red tape, and we could try out event planning in contexts like student council. Choir tours, out-of-town sports tournaments, and service opportunities like Mennonite Disaster Service trips over spring break exposed us to other cities and communities. The mandatory practicum course also allowed for application of academic and practical abilities beyond the walls of CMU; for me, this course was a space to develop initial networks in the professional museum world in

Figure 2. Example of an artwork that highlights both a Mennonite artist and a Mennonite family who commissioned art. David Leeuw (pictured upper left) was among the wealthiest merchants of the Dutch Republic. The artist, Abraham van den Tempel, was the son of Mennonite minister, artist, and art dealer, Lambert Jacobsz. Abraham van den Tempel, *David Leeuw and Cornelia Hooft with Their Children*, 1671, oil on canvas, h 190 cm × w 200 cm, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

Winnipeg, which were later very helpful for my pivot into art history research and work.

After CMU, I pursued a master's degree at the University of Oxford. Plunged into bustling academic life in a city with no Mennonite churches, I was excited about this adventure but also very grateful for the formative time I had had at CMU to define my own faith identity as a young adult. My research was focused on the German Mennonite Balthasar Denner, a successful eighteenth-century court portraitist. Meanwhile, I became increasingly fascinated with the history of the Dutch early modern period, a context in which there were dozens of Dutch Mennonites, or Doopsgezinden, active as professional artists and countless Mennonites who were avid art collectors and art patrons (Figure 2).[2] The following year, I started a PhD degree at Queen's University in art history, where I focused in greater detail on the topic of Mennonite involvement and representation in Dutch early modern art. In 2015, in order to complete this project, I moved to Amsterdam for what was meant to be one year to do field research.

While living alongside thirty other Dutch young adults in an eighteenth-century *hofje* that had originally been intended for elderly Mennonite women and orphans (Figures 3 and 4),[3] I came to cherish the local Mennonite milieu. I learned the Dutch language, built friendships, fell in love with a Dutchman, became a member of the Mennonite church in Amsterdam (Figures 5 and 6), and found interesting work in the field of Mennonite history as a postdoctoral researcher with the Doopsgezind Seminarium (Dutch Mennonite Seminary) and Vrije Universiteit; so, I decided to settle in for the long term.

The Dutch Mennonite community, with just over 4,000 members spread across 100 churches, is small but active. It faces complex decisions about church closures and aging congregations, but the community is also committed to supporting research, publication, and teaching on its heritage, which includes unique early modern hidden church buildings, rare books, artworks, archives,

Figures 3 and 4. The Zonshofje is still owned by Amsterdam's Mennonite congregation. Figure 3: Group photo of elderly women residing in the Mennonite Zonshofje celebrating the 25th anniversary of the directress A. Visscher, 12 July, 1913. Photograph by C.J. Hofker. Figure 4: Young adults living in the Zonshofje at the annual themed costume party, September 12, 2016. Photograph by the author.

Figures 5 and 6. Exterior and interior of the Singelkerk, a hidden Mennonite church in Amsterdam dating to the early 1600s. Photographs by the author.

and artifacts – like the only extant handwritten letter by Menno Simons, and a Mennonite martyr's pear.[4] There is now a Doopsgezind Erfgoedcentrum (Mennonite Heritage Research Centre) and a new guest researcher fellowship program with the Doopsgezinde Bibliotheek (Mennonite Historical Library) at the Allard Pierson Museum.[5]

I could never have anticipated this Dutch Mennonite history adventure during my CMU days as an English major back in 2008–12, but I also feel that my life path would not have turned out this way if I had not studied at CMU. The biblical and theological studies (BTS) minor provided a crucial foundation in Mennonite history and theology that I could continue to fall back on in subsequent research work. At CMU I also learned how to build bridges between academic disciplines. In more recent years, for Mennonite history teaching and course prep, I have often thought back on CMU courses in church history or exchanged emails with CMU profs for inspiration and advice.

Since graduating, CMU and the extended CMU community have remained a part of my life in a variety of concrete ways, and I think this is the case for many

Figure 7. Winnipeg Mennonite visitors, including CMU faculty member Chris Huebner and President Cheryl Pauls, at Amsterdam's hidden Mennonite church, the Singelkerk, March 26, 2017. Photograph from personal collection of the author.

Figure 8. The author, CMU board member Art DeFehr, and Leona DeFehr looking at rare early modern books at the Mennonite Historical Library of the Amsterdam Mennonite Church (on long-term loan at Allard Pierson Museum), April 2023. Photograph from personal collection of the author.

alumni. Though I missed the construction of Marpeck Commons by about a year, it has become a regular haunt whenever I am back in town. I look forward to meeting old friends at Folio, getting stocked up on the latest Mennonite studies publications at Common Word, and making use of the library. (Thank you for extending library privileges to alumni!) Professors at CMU have been generous and encouraging mentors over the years. CMU has also been a place to reconnect for excellent public talks and cultural events: it is a learning and socializing space that not only serves its students but also welcomes in Winnipeg neighbours and the broader Mennonite community.

CMU and Dutch Mennonite Heritage: The Potential for Collaboration

Over the past several years, it has been great to see so many familiar faces from CMU in the Netherlands as faculty, staff, board members, students, and alumni have come over on vacations or sabbatical trips (Figures 7 and 8).

The growing familiarity between Winnipeg Mennonite academics and the Mennonite community in Amsterdam has led to chances for knowledge exchange, guest lectures, and collaborations on projects and conferences. For example, there was a large CMU presence at the 2nd Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival (GMP) organized by the Dutch Mennonite Seminary and Dutch Mennonite Church Conference in 2019 (Figure 9).[6]

Given the roots of so many Canadian Mennonites, and especially Manitoba Mennonites, in the Dutch-Prussian-Russian/Ukrainian branch of Anabaptism,

Figure 9. Closing reflections at 2nd GMP in Mennorode near Elspeet. CMU faculty member Wendy Kroeker is among those commenting on the conference here. Photograph by Jan Willem Stenvers.

it feels logical to continue to build on these friendly connections with Dutch Mennonites. Practically speaking, collaborations could range from more formalized student and faculty exchanges to teamwork on major grant applications and joint research projects featuring this shared religious heritage and early history.

Additional emphasis on material heritage collection and preservation could also be considered. A few years ago, I heard about an exemplum of the illustrated second edition of the Dutch minister Thieleman Jansz van Braght's 1685 *Martelaers spiegel* (Martyrs Mirror) that had become available, and I helped CMU library with the acquisition of this book.[7] Both the book's contents and the story of this book as a material object have become a part of the Mennonite tradition.[8] CMU's copy is now the only exemplum accessible in a library in Western Canada. As was evidenced by this book's arrival on campus, rare primary source material can create a buzz, spark curiosity in students, be used in CMU courses, and attract interest of both scholars and the wider public (Figure 10).

An emphasis on early modern European Anabaptist history at CMU would complement and round out (rather than compete with) the University of

Figure 10. A book history event at CMU with the newly acquired 1685 *Martelaers spiegel* (Martyrs Mirror), CMU Library, March 2020. This is the only copy in a library in Western Canada, making it a draw to the CMU Library. Photograph by Craig Terlson.

Winnipeg's Mennonite studies focus on Manitoba settlement and Indigenous-Mennonite interaction in Canada, the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies' globally oriented programming, and the Plett Foundation's research mandates, which are devoted to the history of Mennonites who migrated from Imperial Russia to Canada as of 1874.

I often hear Winnipeg friends exclaim that they thought for years they were basically German and were surprised to learn their family origins were actually in the Low Countries. North American Mennonites continue to flock to the Menno Monument and *Contourenkerk* monument in Witmarsum, and names of people from Steinbach, Altona, Winnipeg, and Abbotsford fill the guest book in the little hidden church nearby in Pingjum (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Piet Visser, professor emeritus of Mennonite history at the Vrije Universiteit, and Trudy Schroeder, MBBC alumna and CMU board member, at the Menno Monument in Witmarsum. The Contourenkerk (Framework church) monument at the site of the now-demolished Witmarsum Mennonite Church is visible in the background. Photograph by the author.

We have Dutch Anabaptist developments to thank for many characteristics of Mennonite theology, and of course, for portzelky (*oliebollen*); for early versions of the house barn; the know-how for windmill construction, which made Mennonites popular as skilled migrants; and a significant portion of the imagery that still shapes our ways of imagining our early Anabaptist history – including most of the different illustrations representing Menno Simons.[9] The Dutch Mennonite story is an important strand within the longer Mennonite story, and the Winnipeg academic community could continue to take a leading role in preserving and teaching this history in the Canadian Mennonite context.

CMU and the Tradition of Mennonite Higher Education

CMU's Place in a Longer Story

Throughout the history of Mennonitism there has been high value placed on education linked to faith. From the outset, in the sixteenth century, vernacular access to the Bible and communal study were points of emphasis. As the church became more institutionalized, family- and church-based catechism books and


SCHOOL
DER
DEUGD,
Geopend
Voor de Kinderen der Christenen,
Voor eenige jaren gemaakt door THELMAN van BRAGT, is om zijn byzondere nuttigheid verscheiden malen herdrukt, en tot meerder geryf en dienst voor de *Jeugd* nu dezen twaalfden Druk, daarby de Schriftuur-Plaatsen uitgedrukt zyn op ieder Antwoord, hopende dat het wel zal zyn en met meerder lust mag gelezen worden tot eere Gods, en stichtinge van ieders eigen Ziel en Zaligheid.
Daar de oude Overzetting van Nicolaas Biestkens, nieuwlyx overzien en verbeterd.
TE SNEEK,
Gedrukt by F. W. v. B. SMALLENBURG, 1824.

Figure 12. One particularly popular catechism booklet, which went through twenty editions, was the conservative Old Flemish minister Thieleman Jansz. van Braght's School der zedelijke deugd, geopent voor de kinderen der Christenen (School of Moral Virtue Made Plain for the Children of Christians) (1657), the last edition of which was published as late as 1824.[11] Pictured here is the title page of this last edition, 1824. Piet Visser Collection, Zaandam.

baptismal preparation groups ensured that theological tenets were passed along to new generations (Figure 12).[10]

After many decades of reliance on unpaid lay preachers selected from the congregation, professionalized training for ministers came with the formal establishment of the first Mennonite seminary for ministerial training in 1735 in Amsterdam (Figure 13).[12]

Alongside tracks for ministerial training, Mennonite schools, colleges, and university education options for young people increasingly emerged in subsequent centuries and in diverse locations. While Dutch Mennonites played a crucial role in improving public welfare and public school education,[13] private Mennonite education did not find a significant place in the Dutch tradition.[14] Meanwhile, among Mennonites who had, over the generations, moved from the Low Countries into Poland and on to Imperial Russia, private Mennonite schooling did take root, undergoing reform in the hands of Johann Cornies (1789–1848).[15]

Following the migrations in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, private Mennonite schools were established in North America, too. In the twentieth-century Manitoba context, education was soon a point of serious tension, as some Mennonite communities felt deeply concerned about the preservation of language and particular socio-religious values in the face of the Canadian government's expectations for school curricula, including English-language teaching among other things. This "schools question" precipitated the immigration of some Manitoba Mennonites to Mexico.[16] Those who stayed assimilated in some points of education while also going on to establish private elementary schools, middle schools, and Bible colleges – many of which still exist to this day. CMU, a university built upon predecessor colleges Canadian Mennonite Bible College and Concord College (originally Mennonite Brethren Bible College), joined this centuries-long story of Mennonite education in 2000.

Figure 13. In 1811, the Doopsgezind Seminarium (Mennonite Seminary) was moved from the former Waterlander Mennonite hidden church to buildings connected to the hidden church Bij't Lam (the present-day Singelkerk and national Dutch Mennonite church board offices). The seminary's library room (pictured here) remains in use for board meetings and seminary student gatherings. Photograph by the author.

While Mennonite education has sparked its share of debates and had its problems, Mennonite schools in Winnipeg today have a reputation for academic excellence; they are also increasingly seen as good options for both Mennonite and non-Mennonite students. CMU and other institutions of Mennonite higher education each make choices about how they embody and represent Anabaptist theological values. They are also important to the local and international Mennonite world as tools for preserving, interpreting, and passing along knowledge about Mennonite heritage and beliefs.

CMU and the World Today: Stewardship of Anabaptist Legacies

Mennonite schooling has in some instances been characterized by insularity – at its most extreme, limiting student exposure to current affairs, the cultural customs of neighbours, and the latest in scientific discoveries in order to preserve community perspectives. In other instances, Mennonite schools have fostered a distinctive faith-based identity while also striving to be integrated contributors in their local contexts. CMU fits within the latter characterization: I see it as a Mennonite "Jesus community for the world" rather than a Mennonite community for itself.[17] Anabaptist legacies that I notice woven into campus life at CMU include cultivation of a particular kind of safe space for academic

Figure 14. Anne Zernike's inaugural sermon in the Mennonite church of Bovenknijpe, November 5, 1911. Photograph from Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain.

inquiry and theological identity formation (a kind of "separation from the world" with eyes wide open); encouragement of faith that is actively lived out; and an emphasis on radical question-asking that may challenge the social and theological status quo.

There is some historical precedence for reform and decision-making in Mennonite education that pushes beyond current norms of surrounding society and other religious denominations. To offer one example, the Dutch Mennonite Seminary, following a period of biblical reflection and discernment, was the first to admit a woman: Anne Zernike (1887–1972), not originally of Mennonite background, came into the Mennonite tradition, albeit briefly, because she was permitted to pursue her talents within the Mennonite community at a time when no other Dutch seminaries were yet willing to accept women.[18] She was ordained as a Mennonite minister in 1911 (Figure 14).

CMU shares in this spirit of Anabaptist question-asking that can lead to concrete theological innovation and social activism. CMU has, in recent years, hosted events to take steps toward reconciliation with Indigenous neighbours, and in 2024 CMU was present in Winnipeg's annual Pride Parade. CMU is establishing itself as a voice for compassionate, inclusive, and intellectual Mennonite theology. In what ways can it continue to position itself as a place for innovative feminist, Black, post-colonial, and queer theologies from an Anabaptist perspective?

CMU and Anabaptist Heritage Preservation: Students, Public, and Academe

Universities are strongholds of knowledge, thanks to the expertise of their faculty members and the physical research materials that they house for the benefit of students and researchers. CMU is well positioned to be a key institution for preservation of Mennonite history and heritage because of its people and infrastructure; its Mennonite history collection; its inclusion of

Mennonite history and theology coursework despite the changing academic climate; and its location in a city that is an important hub of Mennonite thought within Canada and within the global Mennonite community.

At CMU, as at other North American Mennonite liberal arts universities, changing landscapes in Mennonite congregational life and changes to conference-level funding structures mean the future of faith-based education may look more precarious than it once did. Like these other institutions, CMU is working through a period of challenging identity (re)definition. This moment in Mennonite higher education is paired with broader concerns shared by the majority of universities around the world about funding, student numbers, and the future of many departments in the humanities and in theology. There has been a slew of department closures as institutions choose to focus their resources on programs with the highest student numbers or very obvious career path prospects. These closures are a serious loss. After all, theology and the liberal arts more broadly have been at the heart of academic life since the establishment of the first medieval universities in Europe; these disciplines offer spaces to ask big questions and learn how to communicate well.

It is a relief to see that CMU has so far avoided this trend. The current CMU program structure, which allows students of all disciplines to fit in courses in church history and theology at a time when there are fewer BTS majors provides a basic safeguard for this content. Now, as student number concerns continue, rather than limiting its traditional core course offerings, CMU has instead continued to add new vocational and professional programs like business and social work – thus further bolstering the structure that allows for student enrolment in BTS alongside other program areas.

With an eye to the future, even more steps could be taken to emphasize, expand, and safeguard particular study areas that may not always draw huge student numbers but remain at the core of CMU's identity. CMU could lean into development of courses, public-facing academic events, and research stimulation on subjects that could collectively be considered as the unique "Mennonite heritage specializations" that have made the Mennonite story – and in particular, the Winnipeg Mennonite story – unique: Mennonite history and theology; music and Mennonite hymnody (the predecessor Bible colleges had a strong reputation for excellence in music); and the arts as they have been explored in Mennonite circles (the flourish of recent creativity in literature among Mennonites in Canada, and particularly in Manitoba, is so abundant that it has been called a "Mennonite miracle").[19]

With about thirty Mennonite churches and several conference headquarters and archives in Winnipeg, there are few other cities today with so many Mennonites per capita. Furthermore, these communities include many who are highly

educated and deeply invested in the arts, educational life, and economy of the region. With its specialist faculty, partnership with the Mennonite Heritage Archives on campus, and close proximity to Mennonite Church Canada offices and the Mennonite Brethren Conference offices and archives, CMU already has access to extensive Mennonite heritage brainpower and infrastructure. There are many people in Winnipeg or nearby who are passionate about their heritage, are keen to keep learning about it, and have the resources and skills to support good work in this area. If any place can succeed in maintaining excellent learning and research opportunities focused on Mennonite history in difficult academic times, Winnipeg may be it. The depth of the Mennonite community here therefore also brings responsibility.

As a knowledge centre, CMU serves its students and a wider network of Mennonite public and Mennonite studies scholars. Marpeck Commons has become a flexible space that also functions as a venue for public education. Events like the Friesen Lectures, educational programs for senior citizens, and summer schools also broaden the boundaries of CMU's teaching. These academic outreach activities are a service to Winnipeg, as they offer a visible contact point for information on Mennonites, one of the active communities within Winnipeg's social fabric. They are also a service to small or less-organized local and international Mennonite communities, where there is interest in learning but not always the infrastructure or expertise to host large-scale programming.

Strategic fundraising and allocation developed with a vision for the long-term preservation of these "Mennonite heritage specializations" could be fruitful ways to pursue heritage preservation for the long term. Centuries ago, several old universities and study centres in the United Kingdom and Europe secured their most identity-defining study areas for the future through foundations and endowment funds with specific mandates to cover the costs for professors' chairs, publishing, and student scholarships in these fields essentially *ad infinitum* – even through times when student enrolment is so low that it would otherwise make these study areas impossible to sustain.[20] CMU is still very young. In these first decades of its existence, could this university work with benefactors to develop similar safeguarding structures now for its core subject areas? In time such structures could support endowed professorships, research fellowships, and acquisition funding for library and Heritage Archives collection expansion.

Conclusion

It is both empowering and humbling in times of reassessment to bear in mind how long and diverse this trajectory of Mennonite education has been. Moments of reckoning, like the symposium that inspired this volume, contribute to the direction of this tradition. At this junction CMU has opportunities to continue to lean into the "M" in its name and play a key role in Mennonite heritage

education and preservation within Winnipeg and the broader Mennonite world. I hope CMU will nourish its roots and find ways to celebrate its history as it grows in new directions.

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Canadian Mennonite University and the Paradoxes of Religious Humanist Education

André Forget

I was asked to write this reflection on my time at Canadian Mennonite University in December of 2023. It just so happens that this was around the same time I began work on my second novel, which I quickly realized would be set in part at CMU and would deal with some of the people and ideas I encountered here. It is in the nature of novels to grow beyond their initial inspiration, but as I have laboured to create a fictionalized version of the university to serve the needs of my plot and characters, I have also spent a good deal of time trying to address the question of what, exactly, the real CMU has meant in my own life. There's no point in engaging in this exercise if one isn't going to be honest, so I will try to be as honest as possible. I hope my thoughts will be a useful contribution to the larger conversation – however idiosyncratic they may be.

Let me begin by saying that I came to CMU with only a very hazy idea of what a Mennonite was, and absolutely no intention of becoming one. I enrolled because I was interested in two things: the humanities on one hand, and Christianity on the other. I grew up in a conservative Baptist church, where people often spoke of "secular" books with suspicion, and I attended a public high school, where "religious" books were assumed to be quaint or diseased. I wanted to bridge this gap, to learn from people who wouldn't be squeamish about sexual and pagan imagery in the novels of, say, Thomas Hardy, but who also wouldn't dismiss religion as a relic of a bygone era. Large secular universities could offer the first, but probably not the second; Bible colleges could offer the second, but probably not the first. CMU, I believed, was a place where I could pursue both passions without compromise. And it did seem that way for much of my time at school, right up to my final year.

Like many graduates who pursue careers outside of the Mennonite world, I have often needed to explain what "CMU" means. I usually explain that it is a small liberal arts university affiliated with a Christian denomination that emerged from the Radical Reformation, and that the teaching there is rooted in the principles of religious humanism. In my experience, this answer is usually met either with a thoughtful pause and a change of subject, or with a lot of very interesting questions.

I mention this because I think that phrase, "religious humanism," goes some way toward capturing what my intellectual experience of CMU was like. I always felt that the bedrock ontological assumption at the school – the assumption I am trying to get at with the term "religious humanism" – was that if God had created the universe and humanity, studying the universe and humanity was a way of drawing closer to God. Put differently, religious humanism welcomes questions, because it is confident that it can answer them. And because religious humanists work within a venerable and sophisticated intellectual framework, they are attuned to the fact that many debates that may seem contemporary have in fact being going on for a very long time.

But the intellectual project of religious humanism, beautiful as it is, contains a tension. What happens when the two aspects of this tradition – the humanist openness to the world, and the religious conviction that certain truths have already, and finally, been revealed – lead one in opposite directions? Looking back at my intellectual development during my time at CMU, I have often returned to the solid biblical metaphor of the flock of sheep. Every morning, we were led out onto the moor and told to roam far and wide. Every evening, we were expected to return to the safety of the pen. There was a wonderful security in this: one got to experience the thrill of the question, and the safety of the answer. But as time went on I became increasingly troubled by some of the things going on in the pen.

CMU prides itself on its community life and has worked hard to create a space where different perspectives and experiences can coexist. But a community is ultimately defined by a shared conception of reality in which some things are celebrated, some things are tolerated, and some things are excluded. No culture or society is limitlessly accepting of otherness. Those who believe that gay people are condemned to hell and that the mission of the church is to save them from hell will view the celebration of LGBTQ+ experience as an existential threat. Those who believe the persecution of LGBTQ+ people is a sinful and scandalous affront to morality will find it impossible to tolerate policies that have such an effect. One can have respectful arguments about the role of sex in human flourishing, but when it comes to living together one must still decide what will be celebrated, tolerated, and excluded in common life. I eventually came to understand that my gay friends, while not explicitly excluded, were asked to be far more tolerant of their conservative peers than their conservative peers were of them. One can build the walls of the pen wide and wider still, but for some people to feel comfortable, others will have to be pushed to the margins.

I bring up the question of LGBTQ+ acceptance because it is the one that was most live during my time at CMU, but I am actually trying to make a much broader point about what it means to belong to a community. A community is

always defined as much by what it is not as by what it is, and while communities change and evolve over time, there remains some kind of core identity. How much can a community change before it ceases to be itself? At what point does one become so alienated from a community's core identity that one is no longer part of it? Toward the end of my time at CMU, I became increasingly skeptical about the religious aspect of religious humanism, and this skepticism ultimately led me to conclude that I could not find the answers to the questions I was asking within the comfortable but messy pen of Christianity. I was still a practising member of the Anglican Church when I graduated in 2010, and remained so for several years after, but the humanist education I had received at this institution eventually led me out onto the soggy moor of agnosticism, and I've been on the moor ever since.

Many of my closest friendships were formed at CMU, and I know that this aspect of my journey was not unusual. If CMU exists to form the next generation of Mennonites and of Christians more broadly, then it should be acknowledged that the religious humanist approach to education is a risky one. This point was raised to me when I was working in the school's admissions department after I graduated. On a frigid winter night, somewhere in the Edmonton suburbs, the pastor of a Mennonite church asked me why he should encourage the families in his congregation to send their kids to CMU when it was filled with (I'm paraphrasing here) "godless liberals." At least at a secular college, he said, you knew who your enemies were. I was a little taken aback by his hostility and presented him with a version of my argument about the value of religious humanism. But I couldn't help but feel that he was, by his own lights, correct. The nightmare scenario he described was happening to me.

As CMU contemplates its future mission, I think it should be honest about the risks and trade-offs involved in living out its identity as a university of the church, for the world. But Mennonites, at their best, are not afraid of risk. And for all my ambivalence about my time at CMU, I still want very much to defend the principles of a religious humanist education and, by extension, some version of CMU's mission.

The first point I want to make is that my experience at CMU set me up very well for the job I have now spent nine years doing: writing. This is in part because of the excellent practical instruction I received in my classes, but it is also owing to the high value religious humanism places on being able to read, write, and think critically. The years I spent parsing texts, and religious texts in particular, taught me to pay attention to the kinds of small details from which meaning emerges. This attentiveness to the word is something Christians share with their Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, and it is an essential part of the writer's craft. I am grateful for have attended a university that taught it so rigorously.

The second point I want to make has to do with what can only be called the cosmic horizon of education at CMU. All of my professors seemed to hold a deep conviction that thinking about the world, its history, and the ways people have imagined the first and final things matters. These things aren't (or shouldn't be) elite preoccupations but are the inheritance and responsibility of all people. This is a deeply democratic sentiment, and one that is, in my experience, sometimes shockingly absent in places where people interested in writings and ideas gather. As someone who has a lamentable tendency toward snobbery and elitism, I am eternally grateful that I spent such formative years at a school where hierarchies of all kinds were understood to be dangerous, and where the traditions of religious anarchism and communitarianism ran deep.

The third point I want to make is a little harder to put into words. It has something to do with the way established religious communities like the Mennonites tend to think in centuries. Perhaps it has something to do with consumer capitalism, or the relative youth of countries like Canada and the United States,[1] but Anglo culture in North America is almost terminally amnesiac. We have a fondness for novelty, and a tendency to delude ourselves about how new anything actually is. The past decade has been a time of almost messianic fervour in politics, of passionate moralism in public life, and of apocalypticism in the face of the future. The challenges we face as a society and as a species are, indeed, pretty grave, and these outpourings of rage and grief are warranted. But if CMU taught me one thing, it's that we are not the first people to have felt this way. The debates being had now – about whether we should make strategic compromises to further our vision of society, or refuse to give an inch on our ethical convictions; about whether it is better to retreat into our communities and preserve something for the next generation, or to stand and fight, even if it means losing everything; about whether human life is inevitably tragic and corrupt, or whether the New Jerusalem can be built in our own brown and dusty land – are debates that were had in the early church, and following the sack of Rome, and during the establishment of Christendom in Western Europe, and during the Reformation, and during the socialist revolutions of the twentieth century. There is nothing new under the sun. One role that a university operating in the religious humanist tradition can play is to serve as a bulwark against the temptation to forget, to believe that we are the first people to have considered these problems.

As usual, I am now pushing my word count. I suppose I should conclude by saying that if you leave a university thinking that your teachers were right about everything, they probably didn't teach you very much. I have gone through periods of loving CMU. I have gone through periods of being deeply frustrated by CMU. But for a novelist, loving something and being deeply frustrated by it is productive territory, and my conversations and debates with the people and

ideas I encountered at that university never quite seem to end. Whether that is a sign that the university is fulfilling its mission is for others to determine.

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Growing Place in the Universe-ity

Deanna Zantingh

In reflecting on the decade that has passed since the first year of my undergraduate degree at Canadian Mennonite University, I find myself still haunted in a generative way by the singular question that composed the final exam of my international development class: What is development? As anyone knows who sat through Kenton Lobe's careful deconstruction of what are pretty fragile, often colonial positions on the nature of charity, justice, progress, and power relations, what counts as development depends entirely on the underlying epistemic grounds of the one defining it. Should we measure it by money? By standards of modern convenience? By the human population's happiness? By access to basic needs? By the health of the river?

The critical tools I was handed asked me to understand who I was and how the communities I came from answered these questions, and the reasons they gave for answering them a certain way. They pushed me to see the importance of un-learning amid the task of learning. I didn't see the world the same way after that, because I didn't see development the same way.

I begin by raising the question of what counts as development again not only because it is good fun to turn the tables on your professors, but also because I think it is not unrelated to the question we are reflecting on right now. What makes a good university, and specifically, what makes CMU a good university and how should it continue to develop? What is development?

Of course, this wasn't the only question I learned to ask at CMU, and sometimes questions came from unexpected places. Another question emerged between the second and third year of my undergraduate degree at CMU, following an unlikely road trip home from a conference in Chicago with the late Dr. Wendy Beauchemin Peterson. Unbeknownst to me, I was not only her guest passenger but had also enrolled in a crash course on Métis history and culture. Over two days, our somewhat meandering trip back to Manitoba became filled with personal stories, cultural stories, battle stories, family stories passed down from her kin – members of Louis Riel's Council. More surprising still was the way Wendy's stories climaxed as she returned me to CMU. Driving me through its Charleswood neighbourhood and along the Assiniboine River, Wendy told me stories of the land, of the places her ancestors called home. I didn't see CMU the same way after that, because I didn't see the land the same way.

Wendy told me the truth about the land I lived on, in a loving way; a way that elicited my own desire to ask, Where am I? Reflecting on this experience now, I'd say she masterfully demonstrated what Cree theologian Ray Aldred calls "treaty spirituality."[1] She drew me in as family, because, as Aldred's work suggests, through treaty we are all made relatives, and we are made relatives with the land, and hold responsibilities to each other and the land.[2] Blackfoot scholar Leroy Little Bear further elaborates on the importance of this, since it is these responsibilities that "uphold the narrow conditions that make life possible."[3]

A third question that has continued to be hauntingly generative came, perhaps unsurprisingly, from the land – this time not the lands of Treaty 1 but of Treaty 9 in Northern Ontario. Seated next to me at a picnic table, down by a lake that had formed in his reserve community when Ontario Hydro flooded it to power the mine half an hour away, a young man relayed that he was struggling in school. He turned and said to me, "I'm probably too stupid to finish it" – his words still ring in my ears. When I pointed at the lake and enquired how many days he thought I would make it out there alone, he immediately laughed, "Prolly wouldn't last a day, Dee." His laughter eventually subsided to a more serious tone when I flipped the question on him. He answered, "I'd be fine out there, my uncles and aunties taught me lots of stuff, actually I'd probably be fine for weeks."

Why do education systems get to make young people feel stupid because the system doesn't know how to value what they know? Maybe one day our education systems will do more to fill the gaps for Indigenous youth, and also shift educational structures and content to do the work of learning how to acknowledge their brilliance.

What is education for?
What is development?
Where are we?

Perhaps to understand a reckoning of CMU, we need to understand a reckoning of the broader society in which it sits. As Indigenous environmental justice scholar Deborah McGregor has suggested, "It has taken more than five centuries to arrive at the place of reckoning we are at now, and it may well take as long to recover."[255] While I was writing this essay, huge swaths of land in various corners of so-called Canada were on fire. These ecological realities have everything to do with the ways some segments of our society view development and education. I do not think climate change is a new thing, and by this I mean I tend to agree with the body of Indigenous scholars who contend that the "climate crisis" is merely the most recent development of the colonial modes of being that have already inflicted many fatal losses on human and more-than-human relatives. Scholars like Heather Davis and Zoe Todd suggest the importance of naming this as a colonial operation because it gives

us more awareness of what is causing it,[4] and therefore can be more generative in pointing us toward what needs to change.[5]

Similarly, Willie Jennings's work powerfully demonstrates the operations of colonization and the ways that the disconnection of people from land leads to racialization and to the commodification of land within a theological enterprise.[6] This racialized-commodified existence that shapes our world today is also the deep context of universities – transplanted from Europe and medieval Christian society, they only came to form upon these lands after the operations of colonization had been carried out. Indeed, while CMU arrived on the scene much later, the earliest universities were handmaidens of the colonial project, dependent on land dispossession and the labour of slaves. The formation of modern universities and the generation of their wealth today often rests on the ongoing destruction of other places through extractive industries to generate wealth – like mines that form human-made lakes that some young people sit beside thinking they do not belong, their profound knowledge as earth-keepers never acknowledged, rarely seen or understood.

Similar to the way Jennings describes a hierarchy of being, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate scholar Kim TallBear asserts in her work of interrogating non-Indigenous knowledges that there is an "animacy hierarchy" operating that is "actualized through the associated verbs/adjectives 'animate' and 'de-animate' that refer to the greater and lesser aliveness attributed to some humans over others, and to humans over nonhumans."[7] This raises new questions for me, like How do hierarchies train us to see the world? How are hierarchies fundamental to the structures of university life? What is a university for?

From the original Latin universitas, "university" refers to a number of persons associated into one body, such as an academic community or a scholar's guild. It is shortened from the phrase universitas magistrorum et scholarium, a "community of masters and scholars."[6] The modern university is generally regarded as a formal institution that has its origin in the medieval Christian tradition. And as anyone who has sat in Chris Huebner's class can tell you, attempts to disentangle secularization from Western Christian and Western philosophical epistemic grounds is a complex and nuanced task.

At the time of writing, I am a couple of days back from my first trip to Rome. While there are many lovely things to be said about Rome, as I walked through the streets of what were once medieval Christian towns, I found my spirit a bit troubled. There was this odd way in which the systems and structures I witnessed very clearly come from there, fit there in a way that I'm not sure they do here in the same way. There was a familiarity and yet strangeness all at once that for now I will just say struck me as a kind of placelessness.

Perhaps a story about a visit to the Sistine Chapel can help illustrate. My guide took a moment to point out various biblical scenes: the creation of the world, the flood, the final judgement around the throne, while thoughtfully pointing out that Michelangelo must not have liked animals because none are depicted. How strange to have an image of the creation of the world devoid of animal and plant life. Somewhere in all that beautiful – albeit anthropocentric – artwork, I also recall spotting an angel flying around with Thomas Aquinas's book *Summa contra Gentiles* – one of many important texts Paul Doerksen introduced to me. The quote from Aquinas that came back to me in that moment was one highlighted by liberation theologian Leonardo Boff. Aquinas writes, "Knowing the nature of things helps destroy errors about God.… They are wrong who say: the idea that one has of creatures is not important for faith, provided one thinks correctly about God. An error about creatures results in a false idea of God."[7]

Perhaps like the Sistine Chapel, our current university model leaves something out in being premised on the thriving of humans, and even then, not so equally. When I think about how these systems came to form in this place, I think Aldred sums up our historic and ongoing challenges when he says that "the treaty itself was to become a creation story, telling how the circle of relationships with the land came to include the newcomers. The newcomers, however, steeped in their own alienation from land, could not seem to understand this concept."[8]

While in Rome, it was also interesting to constantly hear references to other guilds and trades in the history of that place. It got me wondering what happened to them, and why the scholar's guild is one of the only ones I've heard of. The short answer is that as industrialization took hold in Europe, other guilds that stood in the way of developing economic systems were abolished. Historian Elliot Krause says, "The university and scholars' guilds held onto their power over membership, training, and workplace because early capitalism was not interested in it."[9]

Of course, late capitalism is now highly interested in higher education, as more and more colleges and universities depend on the exorbitant tuition of international students (which could perhaps use its own reckoning). Today, universities depend on sources of wealth entangled in resource extraction industries. I sometimes find myself sitting in spaces at the University of Toronto with Black and Indigenous scholars who can trace with chilling accuracy how the university is funded by companies and corporations that are causing destruction and violence in the lives of their communities, the communities they became scholars to try to serve. But not all communities are served equally when the earth itself is excluded from the aims of education systems. Amid growing concerns today of increasing managerialization, the rise of corporate universities sees education in the service of its own economic interests and systems.

This leaves the university in a peculiar place, very much in need of reckoning. While many scholars find this an increasingly difficult position from which to speak up, I hope the free stance with which I write here already says something about the kind of dialogical spaces that I know CMU to be capable of fostering and holding in ways that I perhaps increasingly hold less hope for in other spaces. Universities today must find ways to attend to the harms of placelessness, and spaces like CMU can begin from other epistemic grounds to do this in creative, thoughtful, and transformative ways.

Yet the most basic root of "university" is not *universitas*. If you ask me – and, well, you did – that reference point is a bit hierarchical, a bit placeless. It also eclipses the most basic root of "university," which refers not to a hierarchy of membership around beings with so-called rational thought – the most basic root is "universe": "the whole world, cosmos, the totality of existing things"; from the Latin *universum*: "'all things, everybody, all people, the whole world' … 'all together, all in one, whole, entire, relating to all.'"[10] In other words, when "universe" is examined etymologically it can also mean "turned into one," a meaning that stems from considering *unus*, "one," plus *versus*, past participle of *vertere* "to turn, turn back, be turned; convert, transform, translate; be changed."[11] Importantly, I am not advocating for an assimilative "one-ness" that history has already shown us but for more space to appreciate that difference and diversity that have always been part of the whole. Educational processes, then, like the universe-ity, should enable us to turn (back) to one, to the whole, to a wholeness – to the humility of knowing our place and interdependence upon all life forms in the whole of creation.

In my time as the Keeper of the Learning Circle at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, what sounds like a pithy phrase – "the earth is our faculty" – was brought to life in ways that turned, converted, transformed my epistemic grounding. It undid biases I didn't know I had and introduced me to learning systems based in oral knowledge and learning processes. I am so grateful for the folks who helped me see that what makes up a learning community is not just human-people. If we restrict the university to the hierarchy of *universitas*, we are left with too small a vision.

Can the modern university overcome its placelessness, can it grow a sense of place in ways that change what it looks like, how it operates, who it is for, and whose thriving its education serves? Indeed, what counts as education when we live in a world of unprecedented loss of biodiversity? The thing about universities, as with development, is that measured outcomes depend entirely on the epistemic grounds of the ones doing the measuring.

Elders from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission have continually insisted that humanity's "relationships with the earth and all living beings …

are … relevant in working towards reconciliation," and that "if human beings resolve problems between themselves but continue to destroy the natural world, then reconciliation remains incomplete."[12] I believe, as CMU taught me, that at the core of the Christian story remains a call to turn toward reconciliation and healing, to peace that flows from justice. That this difficult and costly path requires continued openness to transformation, to conversion, to missing the mark and trying again. From peace professors like Jarem Sawatsky, I learned to attend to our European alienation from land with an intersectional awareness of how this plays out in our complex histories, with a commitment to keeping open an imagination of what healing justice looks like in light of this.

Similarly, Indigenous theologian George Tinker has drawn attention to the ways that Western Christian institutions tend to add concern for creation onto the end of movements for justice and peace. He finds this insufficient and suggests there is much to learn from the ways that Indigenous Peoples "begin necessarily with creation."[267] For Tinker, coming to recognize ourselves as an integral and related part of all of creation is a theological priority that foundations for justice and peace can build upon.[13] That is, the earth cannot be an afterthought, because "justice and then genuine peace will flow out of our concern for one another and all creation."[14]

If CMU can learn how to be a "universe-ity" and form students who are asked to reflect and know in deep ways how they relate to all that is, how they rely on and are responsible to the whole of the living world, then CMU will have also found a way to live into the reconciliation called for by Indigenous Elders who have been most harmed by European forms of education – a reconciliation between people and, most poignantly, a change in the relationship to the land and to the earth. As Indigenous environmental justice scholars have pointed out,

The academy has existed for 150 years or so within the Canadian context and has been based on an unbalanced Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal power differential.… Co-creating a space of shared storying not only brings a different kind of relationality within academia, it also encourages more equitable, diverse, complex, and complicating narrative engagements.[15]

Such narrative engagements open a place to see that true education is that which allows us to work together to uphold the "narrow conditions for life" for all human and more-than-human communities – not merely to survive but to flourish.

Perhaps similar to the way Dr. Peterson's Métis history tour helped me to see our present place more clearly and to understand that where I am – where we are – is always in a place of relationship to the whole of the living world around us, maybe in another 150 years, the university can and will look drastically different. Maybe

Tinker's wisdom will set in and CMU's slogan will read CMU: A University of the Church for the Earth.

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Epilogue

Speaking with Feeling: A Response to the Symposium's Final Panel

Isaac Kuhl-Schlegel

During the first academic conference I attended, at another Mennonite institution, I was told by a straight-faced organizer that such gatherings were not places for emotion. This claim never seemed more absurd to me than it did by the end of this "Time of Reckoning" symposium, at which point the air was thick with two days' accumulated joys, sorrows, fears, and hopes. Perhaps this abundance of feeling demanded our movement beyond academic prose toward poetry, the reading of which bookended the final panel. Dr. Willie James Jennings closed his initial comments with his poem "Building the New Babel," and President Cheryl Pauls provided another to close the symposium with Jean Janzen's "Sometimes Hope."[1] In addition to these, the panel was haunted by a third poem left unspoken. It was, I believe, curiosity about this poem and what it might take for such a poem to be given voice that shaped the panel discussion's second half. I take the interest in poetry to signal a desire for a kind of reckoning that our usual white academic voice cannot achieve, but this desire does not change that poetry is vulnerable and potentially embarrassing to share. To what extent are we ready to be heard speaking with feeling? Or, and I believe this is asking the same question, in what ways is Canadian Mennonite University ready to be known?

The four panellists voiced harmonious calls for CMU to be more courageous, foolish, and vulnerable in public proclamation. In his final comments, Jennings lauded CMU's "courage and Christian commitment" in undertaking this time of reckoning, and he also pushed us to ensure our voices are heard externally in local conversations in the land and about the land.[2] John Boopalan celebrated the cacophony of the symposium, a word he noted appeared three times during the conference, including in Jennings's poem "Building the New Babel." He argued that the distinctive foolishness of the gospel should be understood as part of our appeal in the world of the marketplace. Rachel Krause, taken by the conference's poetry, noted that we need the poetic ability to "say more than one thing at a time," a concept she drew from a lecture given by Paul Dyck two days earlier on poetry as a way of knowing.[3] (That lecture, delivered a month later than originally planned, granted the symposium an accidentally perfect

prologue.) Of course, saying more than one thing at a time is a reliable way to generate cacophony. Finally, David Balzer was heartened by his colleagues' openness at the symposium, but he also noted that faculty and staff do not always model the vulnerability in speaking that they ask of students in the classroom. He lamented one student's confession that they no longer spoke up with questions in class, for fear of judgement by professors or peers.

This student's example invites an interrogation of the reasons we might be staying silent about ourselves. Boopalan observed that CMU's marketability and distinctiveness seem frequently to be placed in conflict with one another, and this implies that we attempt to bury our distinctiveness in public. Perhaps we have come to feel that CMU is getting away with its existence precisely by evading full notice of the powers surrounding it. We would rather reveal ourselves partially and tactically to suit the interests of different audiences than expose the whole in a recklessly open manner. To this point, another word spoken three times during the symposium was "fugitive," each time connected to a situation where essential practices of Christian life occurred secretly or privately.[4] Surely, the same spirit present in Pentecost noise does move in subtlety and silence. Anabaptism, after all, has a history of secret worship in homes and caves. However, it also has its history of martyrs: we cannot become so comfortable with underground works that we forget to move to the surface, answering the true evangelical call to *bear witness* even when it puts us at risk.

CMU might also fear being openly, vulnerably heard because we do not know how to speak about our paradoxical existence. Rachel Krause noted that every presentation felt the need to respond "yes, and" to concepts in apparent tension, which she catalogued with a litany of pairs (to which we could add *cacophony* and *fugitive*).[5] The pattern that Krause skillfully mapped out signalled the presenters' collective sense that CMU's joy and burden is to occupy these tensions and refuse to foreclose them. Poetry's multiplicity of meaning provides one means of speaking to these things, but saying two things at once doubles the risk of misspeaking; Dyck warned in his lecture on poetry that writing and reading it is often a matter of great embarrassment and foolishness.[6] This foolishness suits a foolish gospel, but it makes the task of finding our poetic voice a daunting one.

This problem of finding out how and whether to speak was at the centre of David Balzer's response, which proved the heart and hinge of the entire panel discussion. Balzer acknowledged that he was both encouraged by the symposium and daunted as to the role of his own voice in it, and these feelings were intensified by the exhaustion of two long days. While he did in fact respond, he ended his response by openly wondering if it would have been better for him, as a white man, to have silently listened instead. That hesitance to speak traced back to Jennings's critique of Western Christian education's shaping students

in the distorting image of the white male subject. Even while understanding that Jennings analyzes whiteness as a construct that goes beyond white people, Balzer confessed that "it's hard for it not to feel personal."[7] Indeed, he admitted that he wrote a poem in response to the symposium with the title "I Am That White Guy."[8] This is the poem that was left unspoken, creating an unresolved space in the conversation. Evidently, Balzer had judged that this was not the right setting for this poem to be read, a judgement I trust. What I find most critical is that Balzer felt his having written the poem was worthy of mention *even if* the poem itself went unsaid. Through this combination of naming and silence, Balzer managed to implicitly affirm that poetry is a vital practice in our reckoning with our institution and its/our whiteness, while also demonstrating our hesitation to read poetry aloud. Ironically, by acknowledging his hesitance to speak, Balzer displayed the vulnerable, personal speaking that he called on faculty and staff to embrace.

The panel became uncomfortable at this stage, indicating that it was achieving something. (I often recall alumna Raven Nickel describing CMU as having made her "gratefully uncomfortable."[9]) Balzer's vulnerability also made the other three panellists newly and differently vulnerable, as a white woman and two men of colour giving public response to the personal feeling of white masculinity. The microphone that had been passed from Jennings to Balzer was now passed back in the same order, each panellist taking a turn to address this question of and from the white man's voice. If this symposium was, as Joseph Wiebe suggested and Balzer echoed, a "crisis intervention" for CMU, it felt in this moment as though at least one of our central crises had finally been located, and now there was a rush to speak to it as the symposium's closing loomed.[10] In particular, Jennings offered a visual aid: his hands, with palms pressed together so that they appeared to the crowd as one, until he spread them apart and reminded us they were two. The challenge thus signified, long faced by people of colour but only recently by white people, is to make visible that the unity presented by racial essentialism is in fact two things: on one hand, ourselves, and on the other hand, the racial image imposed on us.[11]

Jennings's separated hands formed a perfect "yes, and" to a moment in Dyck's Thursday lecture, in which poetic knowledge was illustrated by hands being drawn *together*. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of "chiasmic" knowledge, Dyck had each person in attendance touch their right hand with the left, so that they were simultaneously touching and touched. The distinction between left and right hand remains, but the one cannot feel the other without itself being felt – in other words, it cannot know without being known.[12] I would like to suggest that if we are to speak well about our institutional whiteness, we will need both Jennings's and Dyck's metaphors. Jennings reminds us that the racial imagination is imposed upon our bodies, not something that

emerges from them: we cannot begin to know whiteness if we cannot make this separation. However, if we conceive this separation as total, we simply replicate the false epistemology of the detached white male subject. If we know and speak about whiteness with genuine *feeling*, then the exploration of whiteness will necessarily mean that we notice where whiteness touches us back, impinging upon our lives and bodies. In this sense, even though whiteness is separate from the person, Balzer is right to say that conversations about whiteness will touch the white *person*, and giving voice to those feelings is part of the process.

If CMU is to dismantle its straight-faced whiteness and build a different vision of the Christian scholar, we will have to speak about the ways that process touches each of us. This necessitates uplifting non-white voices, but it also includes CMU's ample white guys, such as Balzer and myself, continuing to speak, although perhaps in new styles and tones. It will not be enough for the privileged to listen; as I have written about elsewhere in this volume, good listening eventually demands response. We will have to be compassionate and patient with each other as we feel our way forward toward a more just and loving institution, and we must trust that the Spirit can resound through our collective cacophony.

Most of all, we must relinquish our self-interest and pride enough to let ourselves be embarrassed. Janzen's "Sometimes Hope" describes hope as "[not] the worried twining / of selfish prayers, but / a reach for something / extravagant, something holy," something that can burn down and then facilitate rebirth.[13] Few poems could better embody Jennings's call in this panel to worry less about "Christianity crumbling," the church's self-centred focus on its own survival, and think more about "what Christianity can crumble," the chance to be involved in this world's death and rebirth.[14] What could we learn to say if we let this hope guide our reckoning forward? What new poetry could we finally learn to speak?

Notes

Doerksen – Preface

1. The symposium was made possible by a NetVUE Grant for Reframing the Institutional Saga, supported by the Lilly Endowment Inc. NetVUE (Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education) is a division of the CIC (Council of Independent Colleges), which consists of over 650 schools of 500 to 3,000 students, the majority in the United States. See **https://cic.edu/opportunity/reframing-institutional-saga-grants/.**

Pauls – Four Measures of CMU

1. These reflections draw considerably on personal memories of events and meetings over more than three decades.
2. See, for example, James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).
3. Charlie Demers, "Comedy, the Logos, and Resurrection," 2023 Slater Maguire Lecture, Saint Margaret's Anglican Church, Winnipeg, MB, October 16, 2023, **https://www.saintmargarets.ca/recorded-lectures**.
4. Government of Manitoba, Advanced Education and Training, accessed 20 December 2023, **https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ald/**.
5. Conversation with parent of a current CMU student, October 2023.
6. Joe Neufeld, "Christian Education: Roles and Future," unpublished presentation, 1982, p. 3; available at Mennonite Heritage Archives, CMU, Winnipeg, MB.
7. MBBC became Concord College in 1992 when ownership was transferred to provincial church bodies from the national denomination. I have employed current names of institutions and denominations unless otherwise noted.
8. A central piece, co-authored by an intentionally national group consisting of Helen Kruger (Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, ON), John Klassen (Trinity Western University, Langley, BC), and George Richert (University of Regina, Regina, SK), was "The Church's Task in Education: An Approach for the 1980s," presentation, July 8–12, 1983, along with contemporaneous responses and minutes; available at the Mennonite Heritage Archives. The early 1980s saw extensive studies based on focus-group conversations and surveys sent to all K–12 and postsecondary persons related to the Conference of Mennonites (CoM, now part of Mennonite Church Canada). MSC was started by a group called Friends Higher Education, made up of mostly of persons affiliated with CoM and the Evangelical Mennonite Church; however, only CoM pursued a major denominational study and assessment of current and future needs. Mennonite Brethren bodies were invited but declined participation.
9. See Abe J. Dueck, *Mennonite Brethren Bible College: A History of Competing Visions* (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2021) for the story of MBBC in relation to its founding denomination, Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Canada. While CMBC and MBBC were started for similar purposes at much the same time by national denominations, the intensity of various dynamics between the two church bodies and their respective schools differed considerably.
10. Kruger, Klassen, and Richert, "The Church's Task," 19.

Dyck – Place of Worship in the Christian University

1. I think here particularly of Willie James Jennings's comments on convening power in *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), chap. 4. The power to convene is both profound and largely unrecognized. Alternate convenings, such as university chapels or the prayer meetings I mention at the beginning of this essay, by their very awkwardness call attention to the existence of the leviathan that is the order they interrupt.

Koop – Telling Our Stories Well

1. Troy Osborne, *Radicals and Reformers: A Survey of Global Anabaptist History* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, publication forthcoming), chap. 2. See also John D. Roth, "2025: Less Triumph, More Confession," Anabaptist World, March 24, 2023, 35.
2. James Urry, "Memory: Monuments and the Marking of Pasts," *Conrad Grebel Review* 25, no. 1 (2007): 51.
3. For a discussion in this subject area, see Cameron Altaras and Carol Penner, eds., *Resistance: Confronting Violence, Power, and Abuse Within Peace Churches* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2022).
4. Laura Schmidt Roberts, "The Workings of Tradition: From 'Distinctives' to a Living Tradition," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 25, no. 1 (2024): 24.
5. Hans Werner, "A Usable Past: Soviet Mennonite Memories of the Holocaust," in *European Mennonites and the Holocaust*, ed. Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 294.
6. Werner, "A Usable Past," 294. See also Werner's discussion in his brief essay "Anabaptism and Jews: Collective Memory and Failure," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 25, no. 1 (2024): 56–62.
7. Elaine Enns, "Healing Trauma, Decolonizing Memory," Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology 20, no. 2 (2019): 14.
8. Barbara Claassen Smucker, *Days of Terror* (Harmondsworth, UK, and Markham, ON: Puffin Books, 1979, 1982).
9. Enns, "Healing Trauma, Decolonizing Memory," 18–19. Here she documents Lynda Klassen Reynolds's work, "The Aftermath of Trauma and Immigration: Detections of Multigenerational Effects on Mennonites Who Emigrated from Russia to Canada in the 1920s" (PhD diss., California School of Professional Psychology, 1997).
10. Enns, "Healing Trauma, Decolonizing Memory," 15. For her more extensive discussion on this subject, see Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021).
11. Sunder John Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency: A Political Theological Account of Wrongs and Rites* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
12. Boopalan, Memory, Grief, and Agency, 117–22. See Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).
13. Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency*, 129. See Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).
14. Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency*, 129, 131.
15. Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency*, 140–43.

16. Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency*, 145.
17. Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency*, 153–57, 180, 207.
18. Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency*, 210.
19. Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency*, 203.
20. Boopalan, *Memory, Grief, and Agency*, 198.

Vander Zaag – Pacifying My Reformational World View

1. Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in Abraham Kuyper: *A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.
2. James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).
3. Ray Vander Zaag, "Transforming Learning and Development," in *A University of the Church for the World: Essays in Honour of Gerald Gerbrandt*, ed. Paul Dyck and Harry Huebner (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2016), 101–21.
4. Two good sources for such approaches to development from a Christian and secular perspective, respectively, are Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, rev. and updated ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011); and Andrea Cornwall and Ian Scoones, *Revolutionizing Development: Reflections on the Work of Robert Chambers* (London: Routledge, 2022).
5. See Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

Doerksen – Are You Alone Wise?

1. I'm referring to a manuscript version of Stanley Hauerwas, "On Milk and Jesus," 1. This essay was subsequently was published in Hauerwas, *Disrupting Time: Sermons, Prayers, and Sundries* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004), 142–48.
2. Hauerwas, "On Milk and Jesus," 2, 4. The quotation appears on p. 6.
3. Hauerwas, "On Milk and Jesus," 8.
4. Hauerwas, "On Milk and Jesus," 9.
5. Hauerwas, "On Milk and Jesus," 9.
6. See Susan Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 198.
7. Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise*?, 171.
8. See John Webster, "Theological Theology," in *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 11–31.
9. Rowan Williams, foreword to *Christianity and the Disciplines: The Transformation of the University*, ed. Oliver Crisp, Gavin D'Costa, Mervyn Davies, and Peter Hampson (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), viii.
10. See Paul Doerksen, "Restlessness as Theological Method," in Laura Schmidt Roberts, Paul Martens, and Myron A. Penner, *Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision: New Essays in Anabaptist Identity and Theological Method* (London: T&T Clark International, 2020), 151–67. See also Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020).

11. Gerald O'Collins, "Jesus Has Been 'the Constant Companion of My Life,'" interview by Sean Salai, *America: The Jesuit Review*, December 2, 2015, **https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/catholic-theology-today-30-questions-gerald-ocollins-sj**; Gerald O'Collins, *Faith Under Fire* (Melbourne: Polding Press, 1974), 4.
12. Oliver Crisp, Gavin D'Costa, Mervyn Davies, and Peter Hampson, "Introduction: Theology and the Disciplines: Building a 'Christian Culture,'" in *Christianity and the Disciplines*, 3, 4.
13. Hauerwas, "On Milk and Jesus," 9.
14. Crisp, D'Costa, Davies, and Hampson, "Introduction: Theology and the Disciplines," 4.

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2. Karen Ridd, email message to author, April 15, 2024.
3. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs, "The Pursuit of Meaningfulness in Life," *Handbook of Positive Psychology* 1 (2002): 608–18.
4. Juan Carlos Hugues and Steven V. Rouse, "Everyone Belongs Here: How Affirming and Non-Affirming Church Messages and Imagery Cause Different Feelings of Acceptance in LGBTQ+ Christians," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 51, no. 4 (2023): 523–36.
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6. "Mission Statement and Commitments," Canadian Mennonite University, accessed April 15, 2024, **https://www.cmu.ca/about/cmu/mission**.
7. "Mission Statement and Commitments."
8. "Mission Statement and Commitments."
9. Nathan Andrews, "Black Excellence Fatigue: Seeing It and Doing Something About It," *University Affairs*, February 9, 2023, **https://universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/black-excellence-fatigue-seeing-it-and-doing-something-about-it/**.

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3. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 195.
4. Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 20.
5. Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 162
6. See Chris K. Huebner "Hoping Against Hope: Imagining a Christian University That Is Not Faith-Based," this volume.
7. Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 170.

8. Paul Hawken, "You Are Brilliant, and the Earth Is Hiring," NAMTA Journal 38, no. 1 (2013): 269, **https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1078017.pdf**.
9. Maggie Macintosh, "CMU Shutters Downtown Menno Simons College Site," Winnipeg Free Press, June 19, 2023, h**ttps://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2023/06/19/cmu-shutters-downtown-menno-simons-college-site**.
10. Dean E. Peachey, "Teaching Within and Between Two Worlds," Direction 37, no. 1 (2008): 111–21, **https://directionjournal.org/37/1/teaching-within-and-between-two-worlds.html**.
11. Ronald Koteskey, *What Missionaries Ought to Know About Premature Departure from the Field*, Africa Inland Mission, 2023, **https://aimint.org/transitions/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/2023/05/Premature-Departure-from-the-Field.pdf**.
12. "Mission Statement and Commitments," Canadian Mennonite University, accessed November 28, 2023, **https://www.cmu.ca/about/cmu/mission-statement**.
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14. National Anthem of Canada, Government of Canada, accessed October 4, 2023, **https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/anthems-canada.html**.
15. Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 128.
16. Menno Simons. "Why I Do Not Cease Teaching and Writing, 1539," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, ed. J.C. Wenger, trans. Leonard Verduin (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 307, **http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2012/01/15/anabaptist-nation-true-evangelical-faith/**.
17. Regina Shands Stoltzfus, presentation to Mennonite Higher Education Faculty Conference, Goshen College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, August 1–3, 2012.
18. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 89.
19. Parker J. Palmer, "Tension, Heartbreak, and Vocation: An Interview with Parker Palmer," Reflections (Spring 2012), **https://reflections.yale.edu/article/seize-day-vocation-calling-work/tension-heartbreak-and-vocation-parker-j-palmer**.
20. See, for example, "Denominational Diversity at CMU," *Blazer* 18, no. 2 (2023): 16.
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4. Marisol Norris, Britton Williams, and Leah Gipson, "Black Aesthetics," *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* 21, no. 1 (2021), **https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v21i1.3287**.

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Brubacher – CUREs, and the Curricular Advantages

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2. Lindgren, "Teaching by Doing," 35.
3. Lisa Corwin Auchincloss et al., "Assessment of Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences: A Meeting Report," CBE – *Life Sciences Education* 13, no. 1 (2014): 30, https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.14-01-0004.
4. My evidence to support this statement is admittedly anecdotal, as good data on the subject are not readily available. Recently, Alaina Buchanan and Ginger Fisher systematically reviewed published accounts of 242 science CUREs but did not include information about the institutions at which these courses were implemented. See Alaina J. Buchanan and Ginger R. Fisher, "Current Status and Implementation of Science Practices in Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs): A Systematic Literature Review," CBE – *Life Sciences Education* 21, no. 4 (2022): ar83, **https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.22-04-0069**. In 2012, faculty teaching CUREs at several American institutions established a network of colleagues: CUREnet. The website for this group, hosted at Carleton College, a small liberal arts college in Minnesota, maintains a catalogue of courses developed by members. See CUREnet, accessed February 13, 2024, https://serc.carleton.edu/curenet/index.html. Most of these courses are offered at universities and colleges with enrollments of over 10,000 students. However, a proper accounting of the relative abundance of CURE-like courses would have to consider the fact that smaller institutions employ fewer faculty and offer fewer courses overall. Additionally, if it is the case that instructors at small institutions can implement CUREs with little formality and hoopla, then such courses are also less likely to be described in the literature or registered in a formal network like CUREnet.
5. Hesna Yigit et al., "Novel Carbapenem-Hydrolyzing β-Lactamase, KPC-1, from a Carbapenem-Resistant Strain of Klebsiella pneumoniae," *Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy* 45, no. 4 (2001): 1151, **https://doi.org/10.1128/AAC.45.4.1151-1161.200**1.
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7. The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Tracking the Global Pipeline of Antibiotics in Development, March 2021," March 9, 2021, **https://pew.org/30pDy96**.
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9. Tiny Earth Network, "Studentsourcing Antibiotic Discovery: Fighting a Looming Health Crisis and Improving Diversity in Science," *Tiny Earth* (blog), accessed February 13, 2024, **https://tinyearth.wisc.edu/**.
10. Simon Hernandez et al., *Tiny Earth: A Research Guide to Studentsourcing Antibiotic Discovery* (Ann Arbor, MI: XanEdu, 2020).

11. Tiny Earth Network, "Studentsourcing Antibiotic Discovery."
12. Amanda Hurley et al., "Tiny Earth: A Big Idea for STEM Education and Antibiotic Discovery," *mBio* 12, no. 1 (2021): e03432-20, 2, **https://doi.org/10.1128/mbio.03432-20**.
13. Paul Dyck and Harry J. Huebner, eds. *A University of the Church for the World: Essays in Honour of Gerald Gerbrandt* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2016).

Brenneman and McLean – The Music of Mentoring

1. Heidi Westerlund, "Stories and Narratives as Agencies of Change in Music Education: Narrative Mania or a Resource for Developing Transformative Music Education Professionalism?," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 223 (2012): 7.
2. Janet Dyson, "Truth and Narrative: How and Why Stories Matter." *In Discourses We Live By: Narratives of Educational and Social Endeavour*, ed. Hazel R. Wright and Marianne Høyen (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020), 27–28, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0203.
3. The idea of claiming one's education comes from a speech by American poet Adrienne Rich, delivered at the convocation of Douglass College in 1977. The following excerpt puts this idea in context: "The first thing I want to say to you who are students, is that you cannot afford to think of being here to receive an education: you will do much better to think of being here to claim one. One of the dictionary definitions of the verb 'to claim' is: to take as the rightful owner; to assert in the face of possible contradiction. 'To receive' is to come into possession of: to act as receptacle or container for; to accept as authoritative or true. The difference is that between acting and being acted-upon, and for women it can literally mean the difference between life and death." "Adrienne Rich at Douglass College (1977)," Commencement DB, accessed May 7, 2024, **https://whatrocks.github.io/commencement-db/1977-adrienne-rich-douglass-college/**.
4. Sherelle Ferguson, "Ask Not What Your Mentor Can Do for You …: The Role of Reciprocal Exchange in Maintaining Student-Teacher Mentorships," *Sociological Forum* 33, no. 1 (2018): 214, accessed August 12, 2023, **https://www.jstor.org/stable/26625906**.
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6. Fiona Hill, Sara B. Castro, Elizabeth C. Charles, Susan Colbourn, Michelle Grisé, Sarah-Jane Corke, Stephanie Young, and Marybeth P. Ulrich, "An Interview with Dr. Fiona Hill on Mentorship, Leadership, and the Importance of Asking the Right Questions," in *Women and Statecraft History*, ed. Seth Center and Emma Bates (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020), 8, **http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27048.4**.

Froese – In Need of the Distant Past

Portions of this essay were supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and a CMU Faculty Research Grant.

1. C.S. Lewis, Introduction (1944) to St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation: The Treatise De Incarnatione Verbi De*i, ed. and trans. by a religious of C.S.M.V. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 4–5.
2. Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 4.

3. Catherine Lévesque, "Conservatives Stop Liberals from Erasing Recognition of Nazi War Veteran from House of Commons Record," *National Post*, September 25, 2023, accessed December 8, 2023, **https://nationalpost.com/news/liberals-stopped-from-erasing-recognition-of-nazi-veteran**.
4. While this reflective piece is about history and CMU, the broader humanities as taught in biblical and theological studies, English, and philosophy also provide curricular examples of a broader temporal horizon.
5. Lloyd Mackey, "Do 'Canadian Thing' Says Vancouver Pastor," *Canadian Mennonite Reporter*, no. 1 (1971), 1–2.
6. For an example of history as a burden, see "Running Record on Fort St. John," p. 2 [1970, by context in file], MB/BOCE/BC 992.1.1, Box 1, File 27, North Peace MB; and for an example of history as a social justice credential, see Menno Wiebe, "The Church in the Native Setting: A Biblical/Theological Reflection," presentation at Annual Sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, St. Catharines, ON, 6 July 1982, p. 1, COM/BC, Box: 991.1.9, File: Native Ministries 1978–85, Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia Archives, Abbotsford, BC.
7. Alan Jacobs, *Breaking Bread with the Dead: A Reader's Guide to a More Tranquil Mind* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020), 11.
8. Jacobs, *Breaking Bread with the Dead*, 6, 17–23.
9. Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 49–50.
10. Gauvreau, The Evangelical Century, 10–11, 70, 77–78; and Scott McLaren, *Pulpit, Press, and Politics: Methodists and the Market for Books in Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).
11. Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century*, 8–9.
12. "William Aberhart, B.A., Our President, Dean and Lecturer," *Radio News* (Calgary: Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, [1930]), 4, Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute fonds, M1357, File 7: Radio Sunday School – ca. 1930–1969, Glenbow Library and Archives, Calgary, AB; T.D. Regehr, *Peace, Order, and Good Government: Mennonites and Politics in Canada* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 2000), 52–58; and Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada*, 1914–1928 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 4.
13. Abe J. Dueck, *Mennonite Brethren Bible College: A History of Competing Visions* (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2021).
14. Jake Peters, "Administrative History," 1988, revised and updated, Finding Aid description, Canadian Mennonite Bible College fonds, Mennonite Heritage Archives, Winnipeg, MB, accessed October 24, 2023, **https://archives.mhsc.ca/canadian-mennonite-bible-college-fonds**; and "Administrative History," n.d., Finding Aid description, Canadian Mennonite Bible College fonds, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, MB, accessed October 24, 2023, **https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/inst_records/canadian-mennonite-bible-college-winnipeg-mb/**.
15. "History of Menno Simons College," Canadian Mennonite University, n.d., accessed January 30, 2024, **https://www.cmu.ca/programs/menno-simons-college**; and "History and Roots," Menno Simons College, n.d., accessed 24 October 2023, **https://web.archive.org/web/20090401061732/http://io.uwinnipeg.ca/~msc/about_msc_03.html**.

16. Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 5–12. There are of course many factors in the rise and spread of Christianity. For a succinct and readable sociological account of how Christianity engaged its world beyond theology, see Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997).
17. William Chester Jordon, *Europe in the High Middle Ages* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 119; C. Stephen Jaeger, T*he Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 325; Werner Jaeger, Early Christianity, 15, 35; and Johannes Fried, *The Middle Ages*, trans. Peter Lewis (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015), 133, 215.
18. Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 24, 298–364.
19. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 389–91.
20. *Tommy Douglas in His Own Words*, dir. Leif Storm (Pebble Beach Productions, 1998), VTR-14224, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina, SK.

Huebner – Hoping Against Hope

1. For a more extended discussion of Jellesz and his relationship to Spinoza, see my essay "From Raisins to Reason: Mennonites, Spinoza, and the Question of Religion," *Direction* 53, no. 1 (2024): 39–50.
2. *Dat Nieuwe Testament ons Liefs Heeren Jesu Christi … gedruckt naer het oude exemplaer van Nicolaes Biestkens* (Leeuwarden: Hendrik Rintjes, 1681). For a digital edition of this volume, see **https://www.google.ca/books/edition/Dat_Nieuwe_Testament_ons_Liefs_Heeren_Je/SphnAAAAcAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PP1&printsec=frontcover**.
3. See Nanne van der Zijpp, "Laus deo, salus populo" (1957), *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, **https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Laus_deo,_salus_populo**.
4. For a helpful account of these various groups and the historical context in which they emerged, see Piet Visser, "Mennonites and Doopsgezinden in the Netherlands, 1535–1700," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700*, ed. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 299–345.
5. Thieleman J. van Braght, *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians*, trans. Joseph F. Sohm (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996), 460.
6. Van Braght, *The Bloody Theater*, 455.
7. Sarah Beckwith's reflections on the theological virtue of hope were developed in a series of lectures titled "Shakespeare's Theological Virtues," delivered at the Richard E. Myers Lecture Series, University Baptist Church, Charlottesville, VA, April 25–27, 2023.
8. I owe this way of putting it to Claire Carlisle, *Spinoza's Religion: A New Reading of the "Ethics"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 132.
9. I owe this way of putting it to Sarah Beckwith.

Magnus-Johnston – God and the Machine

1. Paul Kingsnorth, "The Tale of the Machine," *The Abbey of Misrule*, June 29, 2023, **https://paulkingsnorth.substack.com/p/the-tale-of-the-machine**.
2. Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, "*Notes on Metamodernism*," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 2, no. 1 (January 2010): 5677, published online 2017; Alexandra Dumitrescu, "Interconnections in Blakean and Metamodern Space," special issue "On Space," *Double Dialogues* 7 (2007), Deakin University, archived from the original on March 23, 2012.
3. Kingsnorth, "The Tale of the Machine."
4. Yuval Harrari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (London: Vintage, 2015).
5. Barry Ptolemy, *Transcendent Man* (Docurama Films, 2011), DVD.
6. Jez Corden, "Meet Microsoft Copilot's Evil Twin 'SupremacyAGI': 'Not Your Friend or Equal, but Your Superior and Master' That Demands to Be Worshipped or Suffer Dire Repercussions, You Rebel," *Windows Central*, December 20, 2024, **https://www.windowscentral.com/software-apps/meet-microsoft-copilots-evil-twin-supremacyagi-not-your-friend-or-equal-but-your-superior-and-master-that-demands-to-be-worshipped-or-suffer-dire-repercussions-you-rebel**.
7. See Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage, 2012).
8. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1965; originally publ. 1954).
9. Jacques Ellul, *What I Believe*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).
10. Victor Grauer, "Neomodernism and the Cult of the New," presented at the National Conference of the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers (NAMAC), April 28–30, 1982, **https://www.vasulka.org/archive/Artists2/Grauer/ModernPostNeo.pdf**.
11. Ellul, *What I Believe*, 135.
12. Kingsnorth, "The Tale of the Machine."
13. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 140.
14. Quoted by Paul Kingsnorth in Jonathon Van Maren, "The Last Dregs of Christendom: An Interview with Paul Kingsnorth," The European Conservative, August 30, 2021, **https://europeanconservative.com/articles/interviews/the-last-dregs-of-christendoman-interview-with-paul-kingsnorth/**. Kingsnorth, "The Tale of the Machine."

Krause and Boopalan – Reflecting on "Ways of Knowing 1"

1. The genesis of this co-authored essay has a before- and afterlife. The conference that culminated in this edited book was variously advertised, including as a sense of reckoning with the past and present of CMU. Co-author Rachel Krause had initially proposed a paper that would reflect on the place of forests in the physical and intellectual landscape of CMU. The proposal did not make it to the conference program and is not part of this edited volume. Krause (along with co-author Sunder John Boopalan) was invited to participate in the conference proceedings as a part of a roundtable reflecting on the whole conference, but only at the last minute after

another woman panellist could not. Cheryl Pauls, President of CMU, reflected on the missed opportunity to hear Krause's paper at the conference, especially given the content of keynote speaker Willie James Jennings's emphasis on the importance of place-based learning. Krause, in the end, was invited to write for this volume a reflective piece on "Ways of Knowing 1" and proposed a co-authored essay in this current form.

Why this endnote? An endnote or footnote in academic writing is meant to point readers to a richer understanding of context and other noteworthy elements. The co-authors of this essay find it noteworthy that there are often unacknowledged biases that influence decisions on who is invited and how – sometimes as an afterthought when a "teachable moment" is offered by an influential third person (here we are thinking of Willie James Jennings and his keynote lecture). Although co-authored in a deep, mutual, and equal way, the order of names in the author names is intentional and is meant to capture the backstory and genesis of how Krause (and Boopalan) came to occupy a place at the conference table and here in this book.

2. Christopher Hamlin, "Robert Warington and the Moral Economy of the Aquarium," *Journal of the History of Biology* 19 (1986): 132.
3. Hamlin, "Robert Warington," 144.
4. Hamlin, "Robert Warington," 134–35.
5. Charles J. Krebs, *Ecology: The Experimental Analysis of Distribution and Abundance*, 5th ed. (San Francisco: Benjamin Cummings, 2001), 7.
6. Robert J. Beyers, "The Microcosm Approach to Ecosystem Biology," *American Biology Teache*r 26 (1964): 492.
7. Krebs, *Ecology*, 217.

Dyck – Commending Christian Faith

1. "Mission Statement and Commitments," Canadian Mennonite University, accessed February 12, 2024, **https://www.cmu.ca/about/cmu/mission-statement**.
2. This essay is based on a presentation made at CMU's All-Employee Retreat on May 9, 2023.
3. Although my use of the word "Anabaptist" is anachronistic, I use it to avoid being limited by the ways "Mennonite" is at times understood mainly as an ethnicity.
4. Other loci include chapel worship services, student advising conversations, the co-curricular activities provided by CMU's Student Life department, and service provided by CMU to its constituent communities.
5. "Mission Statement and Commitments."
6. Cf. Richard Rohr, "Mystery Is Endless Knowability," Daily Meditations, August 23, 2016, Center for Action and Contemplation, **https://cac.org/daily-meditations/mystery-endless-knowability-2016-08-23/**.
7. I recognize that there are people for whom the word "Christian" has become problematic because it has become enmeshed with the problems of Christendom. I nonetheless continue to use that word because its occasional occurrences in the New Testament refer to people associated with the person, content, and style of Jesus.
8. Practices and style are also insufficient on their own because they are not self-interpreting – just as content alone (i.e., without action) is insufficient because it is not self-validating.

9. "Mission Statement and Commitments"; italics added.
10. The Mormon leader Joseph Smith translated Matthew 6:33 differently: "seek … to build up the kingdom of God and to establish his righteousness." Note at Matthew 6:33a, Joseph Smith Translation, in *The New Testament … Authorized King James Version, with Explanatory Note and Cross-References to the Standard Works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (Intellectual Reserve, 2013), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, accessed February 12, 2024, **https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/matt/6?lang=eng&id=note33a - note33**.
11. Joshua Brown, "Do We Build the Kingdom of God?," *A Pattern of Sound Words*, April 27, 2015, **https://apatternofsoundwords.com/2015/04/27/do-we-build-the-kingdom-of-god/**.
12. N.T. Wright, "Jesus Is Coming – Plant a Tree!" *Plough*, March 9, 2015, https://**www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/environment/jesus-is-coming-plant-a-tree**.
13. In other words, each of these examples is intended to address particular human endeavours and experiences in relation to God's larger reality and activity.
14. Intriguingly, "evangelism" is a job requirement for positions in certain digital industries. See "Careers," Microsoft, accessed February 12, 2024, **https://careers.microsoft.com/professionals/us/en/c-evangelism**.
15. This has implications for how the church witnesses about Jesus without being colonialist.
16. Cf. John 1:6–8, 14–15, and 1 John 1:1–4.
17. John 10:10.
18. Cf. 1 John 1:1–2.
19. John 17:3.

Dueck – An Invitation to Risk

1. Claudia Dueck, Karissa Durant, Janna Martin, and Rich Janzen, *Hold in Common Research Report* (Waterloo, ON: Centre for Community Based Research, 2023), 4.
2. Dueck, Durant, Martin, and Janzen, *Hold in Common Research Report*, 4.
3. Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR), *Focus Group Guide* (Waterloo, ON: Centre for Community Based Research, 2023), 1.
4. CCBR, *Focus Group Guide*, 46.
5. CCBR, *Focus Group Guide*, 45.
6. CCBR, *Focus Group Guide*, 45.
7. CCBR, *Focus Group Guide*, 45.
8. "Mission Statement and Commitments," Canadian Mennonite University, 2023, **https://www.cmu.ca/about/cmu/mission**.
9. Hongmei Shen and Bey-Ling Sha, "Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Alumni Engagement: When Conversational Voice Matters More Than Openness and Assurances of Legitimacy," *Public Relations Review* 46, no. 5 (2020): 101974, **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101974**.
10. Sharon Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 25 and 68.
11. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic*, 46.

12. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic*, 37.
13. "Mission Statement and Commitments."

Widdicombe – Does Canada Need a Mennonite University?

1. George Steiner, *Lessons of the Masters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2, 182.
2. I am thinking of the interrelated threats of climate change, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, pandemics, artificial intelligence, and world economic instability.
3. Cormac McCarthy, *Stella Maris* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022), 152, 137.
4. Al Purdy, quoted in Rob Goodman, *Not Here: Why American Democracy Is Eroding and How Canada Can Protect Itself* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2023), 171.
5. The argument that follows is based largely on Goodman, *Not Here*.
6. David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (Toronto: Penguin Random House Canada, 2021), 174.
7. On the spiritual and theological power of the African church in ancient Christianity, see Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007).
8. Stephen Leacock, *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice* (New York: John Lane, 1920).
9. Stephen Leacock, *While There Is Time: The Case Against Social Catastrophe* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1945).
10. Goodman, *Not Here*, 68–72.
11. "Thursday, 28 July 1763," in James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (London: David Campbell, 1992), 285. For more on Johnson's conservative anti-colonialism, see Donald Greene, *The Politics of Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 165–70, 268–71.
12. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance, eds., *Francisco De Vitoria: Political Writing*s (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Pahl – Still a University of the Church for the World

1. Harry J. Huebner, introduction to *A University of the Church for the World: Essays in Honour of Gerald Gerbrandt*, ed. Paul Dyck and Harry J. Huebner (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2016), 15.
2. Materials related to the task force, including its final reports, are available at "MC Canada's Future Directions Task Force," CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre, **https://www.commonword.ca/Browse/2092**.
3. See, for instance, Barna's 2022 survey of pastors regarding burnout and leaving pastoral ministry: "Pastors Share Top Reasons They've Considered Quitting Ministry in the Past Year," April 27, 2022, **https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry/**.

Wiebe – Mennonites, Relationality, and Intellectual Formation

1. Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 159.
2. Agnes Callard, "The Real College Scandal," *The Point 25* (2021). **https://thepointmag.com/examined-life/the-real-college-scandal/**.

3. Callard, "The Real College Scandal."
4. Callard, "The Real College Scandal."
5. Callard, "The Real College Scandal."
6. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
7. Kim TallBear, "Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming," *Kalfou* 6, no. 1 (2019): 24–41.
8. "Spirituality" is a more problematic term to describe Indigenous religion than colloquially thought. David Shorter outlines the case for "scholars hoping to describe indigenous worldviews and practices in terms that are reliable, useful, and clear" to "give up the term 'spiritual.'" The term downplays or erases relationality in a way that "continues the logic of settler colonialism." David Delgato Shorter, "Spirituality," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Indian History*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 435, 440.
9. See Paul L. Gareau and Jeanine LeBlanc, "Our Spiritual Relations: Challenging Settler Colonial Possessiveness of Indigenous Spirituality/Religion," *Anthropologica* 65, no. 1 (2023): 1–28.
10. Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 43.
11. Jennings, *After Whiteness*, 43–44.
12. Joseph R. Wiebe, "Cultural Appropriation, Bioregionalism, and the Need for a Decolonial Ethics of Place," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 49, no. 1 (2021): 138–58. For another discussion of appropriation in a Mennonite-Indigenous context, see Jonathan Dueck, "From Whom Is the Voice Coming? Mennonites, First Nations People, and Appropriation of Voice," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (2001): 144–57.
13. TallBear, "Caretaking Relations," 32. Italics original.
14. See Angela Amato, "First Nations Chief Critical of Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's Indigenous Heritage Claim," CBC, November 18, 2022, **https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/first-nations-chief-critical-of-alberta-premier-danielle-smith-s-indigenous-heritage-claim-1.6657519**.
15. For a theological account of how identity politics perpetuates racialization, see Jonathan Tran, *Asian Americans and the Spirit of Racial Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).
16. Kim TallBear, "Identity Is a Poor Substitute for Relating: Genetic Ancestry, Critical Polyamory, Property, and Relations," in *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, ed. Brendan Hokowhitu, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Chris Andersen, and Steve Larkin (New York: Routledge, 2021), 467–78.
17. Sofia Samatar, *The White Mosque* (New York: Catapult, 2022).
18. Chris Andersen, "The Institutional and Intellectual Trajectories of Indigenous Studies in North America: Harnessing the 'NAISA Effect,'" in *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, ed. Brendan Hokowhitu, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Chris Andersen, and Steve Larkin (New York: Routledge, 2021), 13.

19. Janice Cindy Gaudet, "Keeoukaywin: The Visiting Way – Fostering an Indigenous Research Methodology," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 7, no. 2 (2019): 47–64.
20. Gaudet, "*Keeoukaywin*," 53.
21. Gareau and LeBlanc, "Our Spiritual Relations," 3. See also Paul Gareau and Molly Swain, "Indigenous Knowledges," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (January 2024), **https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.1178**.
22. Paul's influence on how I understand relationality is sweeping and can't be understated. My knowledge of relationality not only comes from his writing but also our visits. As colleagues and friends, our conversations have led me to experience the highest intellectual goods; this essay is one expression that experience has generated.

Kuhl-Schlegel – Attending and Responding to CMU

1. Simone Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," in *Waiting for God* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), 106.
2. Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies," 109–10.
3. Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xiv–xv.

Wollmann – Becoming Re-Grounded in Scripture

1. Peter Riedemann, P*eter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, trans. and ed. John J. Friesen (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999; Walden: Plough Publishing House, 2019).

Hofer

1. Not all of our communities consider it advisable to send students to CMU, for a variety of reasons; indeed, eleven Hutterites are currently studying at Brandon University and one is enrolled at Providence College. While some communities take an active role in directing members to study at a particular institution, others allow individual students more freedom to choose.
2. "Temporal bandwidth" refers to the capacity to pay attention to the lessons of the past in order to avoid the trap of presentism, the tendency to uncritically interpret past events in terms of modern values and concepts. See Alan Jacobs, "Presentism and Temporal Bandwidth," chap. 1 in Alan Jacobs, *Breaking Bread with the Dead* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020).

Schroeder-Van 't Schip – Münster, Motets, Sonnets, and Paintbrushes

1. This was one of several frequently copied images about early Anabaptism used in Dutch polemical publications and prints throughout the seventeenth century and beyond. On the different images and their functions, see Nina Schroeder, "Heretics and Martyrs: Picturing Early Anabaptism in Visual Culture of the Dutch Republic" (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2018).
2. Many from more progressive groups preferred to call themselves "Doopsgezind" rather than Mennonite. For details about some these artists, see Nina Schroeder, "Art and Heterodoxy in the Dutch Enlightenment: Arnold Houbraken, the Flemish Mennonites, and Religious Difference in the Great Theatre of Netherlandish Painters and Painteresses (1718–1721)," *Church History and Religious Culture* 2–3 (2021): 324–56.

3. Hofjes are small housing courtyards that are often located just off of larger Dutch streets or canals. The Zonshofje, was originally used as a Mennonite hidden church beginning in the late seventeenth century.
4. Nina Schroeder, "Maeyken Boosers' Pear: A Mennonite Relic at the Library," *Anabaptist Historians*, May 19, 2019, **https://anabaptisthistorians.org/2019/05/19/maeyken-boosers-pear-a-mennonite-relic-at-the-library/**.
5. "Fellowship for the 'Doopsgezinde Bibliotheek,'" Allard Pierson, **https://allardpierson.nl/en/research/fellowships/fellowship-for-the-doopsgezinde-bibliotheek/**.
6. Many CMU faculty members contributed chapters to the resulting edited volume. See Fernando Enns, Nina Schroeder-van 't Schip, and Andres Pacheco, eds., *A Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: Global Mennonite Perspectives on Peacebuilding and Nonviolence* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2023).
7. Thieleman Jansz van Braght, *Het bloedig tooneel, of Martelaers spiegel der doops-gesinde of weereloose christenen …* (Amsterdam: J. Vander Deyster et al., 1685).
8. For the centuries-long history of this book, see David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror: A Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).
9. None are portraits from life; they are imagined likenesses. These are catalogued in Piet Visser and Mary Sprunger, with Adriaan Plaak, *Menno Simons: Places, Portraits, Progeny, trans. Gary K. Waite* (Altona, MB: Friesens, 1996).
10. Erland Waltner, Nanne van der Zijpp, Harold S. Bender, and James H. Waltner, "Baptismal Instruction," Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), 1987, **https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Baptismal_Instruction**.
11. Alfred van Wijk, *Plicht tot leren & plichten leren* (Kampen, NL: Kok, 2007), vol. 1, 96–100; vol. 2, 51–58, nos. B1.19.1 to B1.19.20.
12. Some ministerial training had already begun in Amsterdam in the 1680s. During the Enlightenment, candidates at the seminary followed an academic program in theology and also several aspects of the natural sciences, which were understood as avenues to understand God. C.f. Brüsewitz and J. Brüsewitz, "Sociëteiten en seminarie: Organisatie en onderwijs," in *Wederdopers, menisten, doopsgezinden in Nederland*, ed. S. Groenveld, J.P. Jacobszoon, S.L. Verheus (Zutphen, NL: Walburg Pers, 1980), 84–100, especially 91.
13. On Dutch Mennonite contributions to improvements in public welfare, including education, see Michael Driedger, "An Article Missing from the Mennonite Encyclopedia: The Enlightenment in the Netherlands," in *Commoners and Community: Essays in Honour of Werner O. Packull*, ed. C. Arnold Snyder (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2002), 101–20.
14. An exception to this was Mennonite-run schooling in Haarlem, which saw its heyday in the nineteenth century. The school buildings closed in the twentieth century. Simon Verheus, *Naarstig en vroom: Doopsgezinden in Haarlem 1530-1930* (Haarlem, NL: Rombach boek en beeld, 1993), 222–30.
15. Walter Quiring, "Cornies, Johann (1789–1848)," GAMEO, 1955, **https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Cornies,_Johann_(1789-1848)&oldid=163039**.
16. Cornelius Krahn and H. Leonard Sawatzky, "Old Colony Mennonites," GAMEO, 1990, **https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Old_Colony_Mennonites&oldid=170107**.

17. This turn of phrase used by River East Church also makes me think of CMU's characteristics. "Inclusivity Statement," River East Church, **https://rivereastchurch.ca/inclusivity-statement/**.
18. On her life, work, PhD studies, involvement among Mennonites, work within Vrijzinnig Protestantism, and marriage to artist Jan Mankes, see Foukje Pitstra, *Ontelbare enkelvouden: Dr. Anne Mankes-Zernike* (1887–1972) een biografie (Zoetermeer, NL: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2014).
19. Magdalene Redekop, *Making Believe: Questions About Mennonites and Art* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 4 and passim.
20. This is the case for many theology chairs and study positions at institutions like Oxford and Cambridge. The Dutch Mennonite community has a variety of funds from centuries ago which continue to support research and publications in Dutch Mennonite studies. One example is the Fonds Oosterbaan; see "Stichting Fonds Oosterbaan," **https://stichtingfondsoosterbaan.nl/**.

Forget – Canadian Mennonite University and the Paradoxes of Religious Humanist Education

1. I am speaking, of course, about Canada and the United States as settler-colonial political entities, not the cultures they have tried to displace.

Zantingh – Growing Place in the Universe-ity

1. Ray Aldred, "The Land, Treaty, and Spirituality: Communal Identity Inclusive of Land," *NAIITS Journal* 17 (2020): 2.
2. Aldred, "The Land, Treaty, and Spirituality," 7.
3. Leroy Little Bear, "Big Thinking – Blackfoot Metaphysics: Waiting in the Wings," presented at Congress: Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Calgary, June 1, 2016, **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_txPA8CiA4.**
4. Deborah McGregor, "Mino-Mnaamodzawin," Environment and Society 9, no. 1 (2018): 21, **https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2018.090102**.
5. Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, "On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 4 (2017): 762.
6. Perhaps instructive to the dialogue here, Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel draws clear connections between university land holdings and the revitalization of Indigenous food systems. He writes, "Qwlháal, a carbohydrate-rich bulb, has been a key food and trade item of Indigenous peoples in the Northwest region for generations.… According to Songhees First Nation activist Cheryl Bryce, the University of Victoria is located in the one area where kwetlal [qwlháal] was celebrated, harvested, pit cooked, and traded with people up and down the coast.… Today, the kwetlal food system comprises less than five percent of its original yield over 150 years ago." Corntassel, "Restorying Indigenous Landscapes: Community Regeneration and Resurgence," in *Plants, People, and Places: The Roles of Ethnobotany and Ethnoecology in Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights in Canada and Beyond*, ed. Nancy J. Turner (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 357.
7. Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

8. Kim TallBear, "Beyond the Life/Not-Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking, and the New Materialisms," in *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, ed. Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 180.
9. Elliot A. Krause, *Death of the Guilds: Professions, States, and the Advance of Capitalism, 1930 to the Present*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 9. See also Online Etymology Dictionary, "University," https://www.etymonline.com/word/university.
10. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1, 2, c.3.; quoted by Leonardo Boff in *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 189.
11. Quoted in Aldred, "The Land, Treaty, and Spirituality," 8.
12. Krause, *Death of the Guilds*, 13.
13. Online Etymology Dictionary, "Universe," **https://www.etymonline.com/word/universe**.
14. Online Etymology Dictionary, "Universe."
15. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "Principles of Reconciliation," in *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), 122, 123, **https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/trc/IR4-6-2015-eng.pdf**.
16. George Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 36.
17. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 40.
18. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 41.
19. Randolph Haluza-DeLay, Pat O'Riley, Peter Cole, and Julian Agyeman, introduction to *Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada*, ed. Julian Agyeman, Peter Cole, Randolph Haluza-DeLay, and Pat O'Riley (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 5.

Kuhl-Schlegel

1. Willie James Jennings and Cheryl Pauls, closing comments and roundtable panel discussion, "A Time of Reckoning: Telling the CMU Story" symposium, Winnipeg, MB, October 27–28, 2023; Willie James Jennings, "Building the New Babel," in *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020); Jean Janzen, "Sometimes Hope," in *Snake in the Parsonage* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1995), 63.
2. Jennings, closing comments, "A Time of Reckoning."
3. Paul Dyck, "Humanity's Poetic Vocation," Ways of Knowing 1 – CMU Community Lecture Series, Winnipeg, MB, October 26, 2023.
4. Paul Dyck, in the symposium's opening chapel, observed that in his days in the secular university, "the place of worship in the university was largely fugitive," carved out by small groups in vacant classrooms. Dyck, "The Place of Worship in the Christian University (or, the Christian University as a Place of Worship)," "A Time of Reckoning" symposium (see also Dyck's essay of the same title, this volume). Willie James Jennings spoke of sharing as "a fugitive practice, a practice being done secretly" among us, which can undermine our obsession with possession. Jennings, "Gathering the Pieces that Remain: Weaving Life Together from the Fragments of Faith, Race,

and Land," Q&A, "A Time of Reckoning" symposium. Lastly, Joseph Wiebe claimed the process of creating kin and enabling more people to make CMU a home "will be fugitive," emerging organically within social contexts from athletics to ensembles. Wiebe, "Friends, Relatives, and Other Addictions," Q&A, "A Time of Reckoning" symposium.

5. Rachel Krause, closing panel discussion, "A Time of Reckoning."
6. Dyck, "Humanity's Poetic Vocation."
7. Balzer, closing panel discussion, "A Time of Reckoning."
8. Balzer, closing panel discussion, "A Time of Reckoning."
9. Raven Nickel, "Gratefully Uncomfortable: A Reflection on the CMU Experience," Canadian Mennonite University, April 10, 2015, **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhH2mUM-mas**.
10. Wiebe, "Friends, Relatives, and Other Addictions."
11. Jennings, closing panel discussion, "A Time of Reckoning."
12. Dyck, "Humanity's Poetic Vocation."
13. Janzen, "Sometimes Hope," lines 21–24.
14. Jennings, closing comments, "A Time of Reckoning."

A Time of Reckoning

Telling the Canadian Mennonite University Story

Edited by Paul G. Doerksen

The proceedings of an October 2023 symposium of faculty members, alumni, and external stakeholders at Canadian Mennonite University, deliberating the institution's history and mission in anticipation of its 25th anniversary. Rather than pursuing a unified narrative of Christian or Mennonite higher education, the presentations are a series of polyvocal reckonings of community engagement and scholarly inquiry.

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