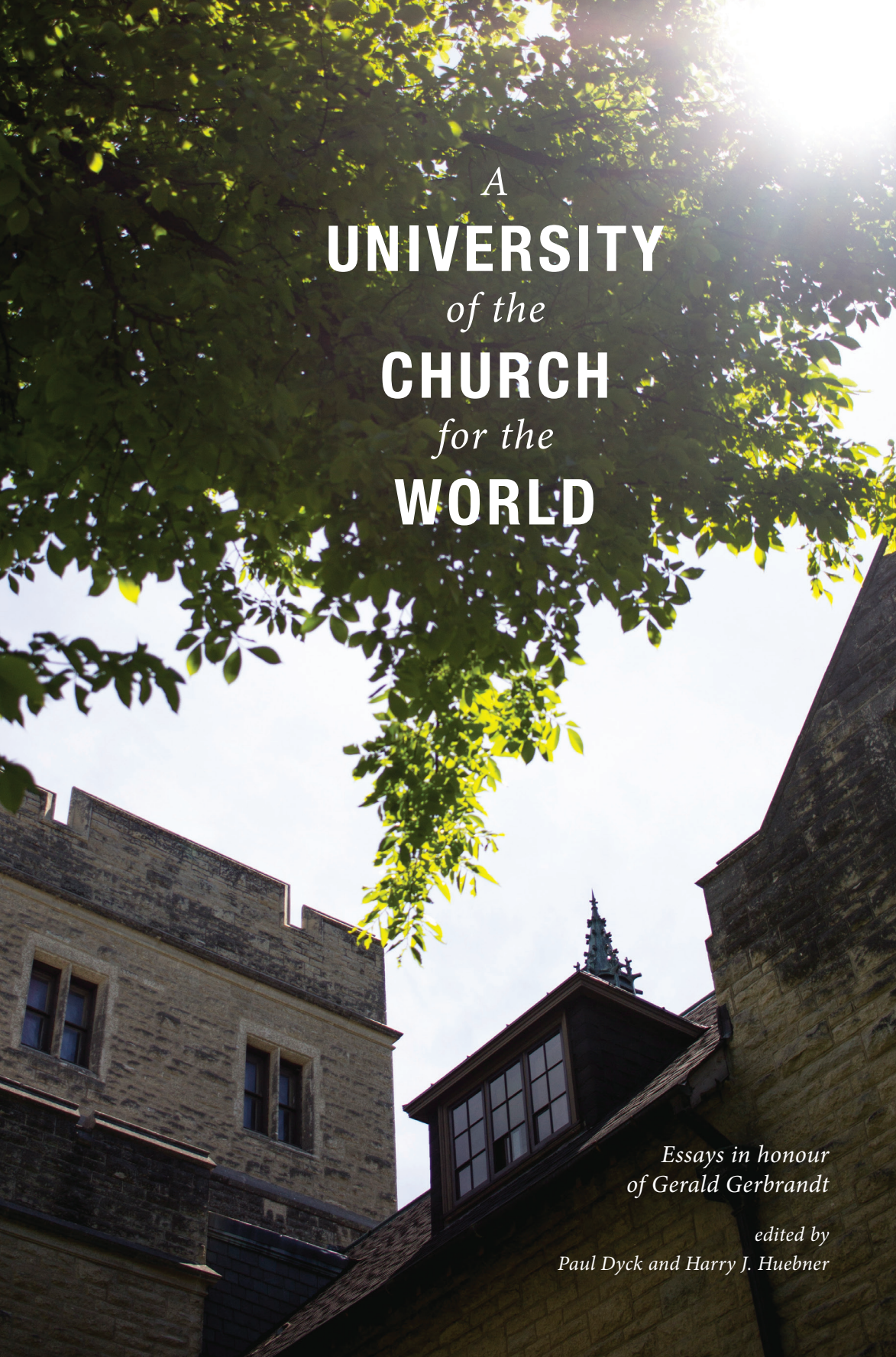

# *A* UNIVERSITY *of the* CHURCH *for the* WORLD

*Essays in honour of Gerald Gerbrandt*

*edited by*
*Paul Dyck and Harry J. Huebner*

# A University of the Church for the World:

## *Essays in Honour of Gerald Gerbrandt*

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# Introduction

# A University of the Church for the World

*Harry J. Huebner*

## Introduction

On September 28, 2003, Gerald Gerbrandt was installed as President of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). In June 2012 he retired from the presidency. For nine years and even longer with the CMU presidential team Gerbrandt was involved in leading a community in shaping a university.[1] This was no small task particularly because the new university was born of the ashes of three existing institutions: two Bible colleges with long-standing identities and distinct denominational histories and supporting constituencies and a relatively new college/teaching centre at a local public university.

On the occasion of Gerbrandt's installation Professor Stanley Hauerwas from Duke University was the guest speaker. He preached a sermon "On Milk and Jesus"[2] and suggested among other things that there were violent and nonviolent ways of milking cows. Peculiar perhaps, but he was reminding Mennonites of something he said they already knew but stood in danger of forgetting. Why might they forget? Because of the alluring forces of binary thought, namely, that

1 Canadian Mennonite University began in 2000 with the union of three existing colleges in Winnipeg (Concord College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, and Menno Simons College). With the exception of Menno Simons College the curriculum was radically reimagined. During the first three years of operation CMU was led by a presidential team consisting of the presidents from each of the three colleges—John Unger, George Richert, and Gerald Gerbrandt. Gerbrandt became the sole president in July 2003.

2 Stanley Hauerwas, "On Milk and Jesus," in *Disrupting Time: Sermons, Prayers, and Sundries* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2004), 142–8. See also Hauerwas, "What Would a Christian University Look Like? Some Tentative Answers Inspired by Wendell Berry," in his *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 92–107.

intellectual enquiry of "objective reality" (the ostensible *raison d'être* of modern universities) and the quest for sustainable views of goodness and beauty (often seen as anathema to modern universities) have become disparate pursuits. The reminder was that peace and its building, if it is to be Christian, goes all the way down, even to milking cows, and it will require a peculiar university to render this notion intelligible. He challenged the president to offer leadership in the building of that kind of university.

This book presents voices and reflections after more than ten years of CMU's existence. That is, it is about its mission and function, particularly as it got articulated and practiced during Gerbrandt's tenure as president. Yet more than this, it is about how its practitioners—faculty and staff—have sought to embody the vision of the school in their respective roles. CMU stands within a particular tradition, the Christian-Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, and one that is located in a particular place, Winnipeg, Canada. Place, tradition, and style matter in parsing what a university is and does. But this does not mean that the voices in the book will speak in unison; rather they will represent the dialogue, even debate, which Gerbrandt's leadership has opened up, namely, the pursuit to unveil the world given to us by creator God.

The essays in this volume are written mostly by those who are employed at CMU and hence see the enterprise of crafting the university as one that invites their own reflections. Most have been part of the discussion over what a university does in general and what they might contribute as dedicated interlocutors in the ongoing debate around its shaping. Some will speak more from the outside than others whether as administrators, professors, or alumni, although "outside" here is an "inside outside" in that all have first-hand knowledge of CMU. And, all are tied to some form of exchange with Gerbrandt as president.

Gerbrandt was a person of vision. It seemed that he never stopped dreaming about the nature of CMU, what its mandate was or ought to be, what it was called to do given its charge, what it was able to do given its resources, and what it must do given whom it served. The number of vision documents that came from his computer (and no doubt more still remained there) is perhaps not even known to him. Of course, this was at a time when CMU was inventing itself, an opportunity (and responsibility) not too many university presidents have.

But Gerbrandt was not merely an administrator; he was also a scholar and teacher. Perhaps even more formative, he was a person of the church. He was born into a church family (the Henry and Susan Gerbrandt family with origins in Altona, Manitoba), baptized into a church community, and he has embraced the church with passion and energy. The local church, the larger church, and the Christian faith in general matter to him. He is also an Old Testament scholar and teacher.[3] And when he speaks he reminds his audiences that the church's story began a long

3 See, for example, his recently published volume in the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series: Gerald E. Gerbrandt, *Deuteronomy* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2015).

time ago and indeed the nature of the church is only intelligible when it permits the biblical imagination to illuminate its current identity and way of being. This does not mean that the church, or for that matter the Christian faith, is at its best when it simply repeats what has already been said and done in former times, but rather we, the contemporary church, participate in this same drama, improvising our own "act" in the spirit and character of the past, made visible for all to see anew. Performativity of the scriptures is perhaps an apt way to characterise his commitment to both the church and the scriptures and it is this commitment that has infused both his leadership style and his philosophy of administration. This has meant that whatever the current view of effective administrative leadership, it was not his unless it passed muster by the drama already given and tested by a tradition of faithful witnesses.

One of the lines Gerbrandt coined as a descriptor of CMU is that it is "a university of the church for the world." This has become a motto of sorts for the university over the years and is fitting for the manner in which CMU today understands itself. But admittedly this is an atypical view of the modern university. In fact there are those who would consider a "church university" an oxymoron, since the qualifier "church" appears to curtail the very academic freedom that "university" names. Yet academic freedom is enthusiastically embraced by Gerbrandt and the CMU administration. How can this be? This is indeed not a simple matter that can be settled with a frank declaration, and so it requires careful study. This volume addresses this issue.

Gerbrandt did not see CMU as either elitist or unique; nor should it serve only a narrow constituency. Although it is rooted in a set of convictions expressed in its mission and about what it means to be human and what it means to be world, these convictions require testing, debate, and clarification over time. While it holds human well-being and wholeness as part of the university's scope, how such notions get articulated and expressed is not an abstract matter but requires a community of people who care about these things. So perhaps the most important conviction of all is a style of truth-seeking; for to know the truth requires more that right thinking, speaking, and power to execute ideas, it requires a unique kind of training: of the eyes to see rightly, the heart to feel rightly, and the feet the walk rightly. To say this differently, it requires a faithful and thoughtful community. Occupying the space in which such training takes form and developing its architecture thoughtfully has been the style of Gerbrandt's journey as president. Hence it is easy to see why those who share in the journey are eager to express gratitude and to celebrate Gerbrandt's contribution to the shaping of an institution they all love.

## University

There is no shortage of literature on the nature of the university. The quest to understand its function is not new. Moreover, we should be careful not to assume that there is a single notion of what a university is and does. In fact, given that our society lacks a culture of unity, it should not be surprising to find multiple answers to the question on the university's nature.

But there is a history. And this history shows that each university has sought to build its institution on a set of convictions and excellences it has held dear however those were defined. The oldest university in Europe dates back to the eleventh century[4] but other universities in India, Morocco, and Egypt, for example, predate the European universities, some by several centuries. What this history reveals is that the intellectual pursuit of knowledge has always been in the service of some end: either the church, the state, society, or perhaps some combination of these. In the late eighteenth century the purpose of the university, at least in part, was reformulated in terms of being in the service of "pure reason" alone. Of course, this claim is not without contention.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that there are two kinds of pursuits within the modern university characterised by what he called the "higher" and "lower" faculties of learning.[5] The higher faculties, of which there are three—theology, law, and medicine—are of key interest to the government and hence should be so regulated and funded. The lower faculties like philosophy and the pure sciences should not be restricted; they should be permitted to follow wherever reason takes them.

Kant's rationale for this division is simple. All governments are concerned about the well-being of their citizens, "the *eternal* well-being of each . . . [the] civil well-being . . . and finally the *physical* well-being . . ."[6] Hence, the study of theology, law, and medicine respectively. He goes on to explain that the theologian does not draw "his teachings from reason but from the *Bible,* the professor of law gets his, not from natural law, but from the *law of the land*, and the professor of medicine . . . from *medical regulations*."[7] That is, these faculties are in the direct service of the government. But with the lower faculties it is different. Here the source of teaching is not "directives by order of a superior" but "the principles of thought in general" or what he elsewhere calls pure reason. He concludes, "in other words, a university must have a faculty of philosophy."[8] But even here, governments must promote (that is, fund) these unfettered intellectual pursuits.

This division of the faculties is rooted in Kant's more basic binary of pure and practical reason, and a particular view of the autonomy of reason. While universities today tend to find fault with Kant's articulation of the division of pure and practical reason, the commitment to reason's autonomy is widely embraced as a form of liberation from the authority of superiors and traditions in all areas of

4 The University of Bologna was founded in 1088.

5 See Immanuel Kant, "The Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Theology Faculty" (1794). Available online at http://la.utexas.edu/users/hcl-eaver/330T/350kPEEKantConflictFacNarrow.pdf. Accessed January 11, 2016.

6 Ibid., 3. (Emphasis in original).

7 Ibid., 4. (Emphasis in original).

8 Ibid., 6.

learning. Hence, today "autonomous reason" tends to be applied to each part of the university curriculum resulting in the tendency to "autonomize" the different faculties and departments themselves in a manner that makes even common speech, let alone a holistic understanding, difficult. The fact is that most universities today have a deeply fragmented curriculum.

In 1854, a mere fifty years after Kant's death, Anglican Cardinal John Henry Newman published a book called *The Idea of a University* in which he promoted the importance of the unity of knowledge in the university.[9] He believed that in order to understand God's magnificent universe we need careful study in the multiple areas of enquiry that universities call disciplines—physics, biology, psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, theology, and so on, but we also need to understand the relationships between them and the ultimate end that unites them. The reason for the division of the disciplines is to make manageable a careful investigation of a particular subject matter, and yet we too easily conclude from the partial knowledge gained from each that it explains the whole. It doesn't! This then becomes a major lacuna within universities and the "disciplines" that are best set to push the agenda of the whole—the humanities—tend to themselves become insular disciplines with their own subject matter and styles of knowledge.

Newman held that goodness, beauty, and wisdom were virtues that the university in all its manifold knowledge dimensions should cultivate; that is, it should provide the skill (wisdom) for seeing the world aright. Hence he says, somewhat surprisingly, that it is not truth and knowledge that are the real ends of the university; rather the university should be conceived as

> . . . a place which wins the admiration of the young by its celebrity, kindles the affection of the middle-aged by its beauty, and rivets the fidelity of the old by its associations. It is the seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of faith, and Alma Mater of the rising generation. It is this and a great deal more . . .[10]

This means that while the university is a place where universal knowledge should be sought, knowledge was not to be seen as an end in itself. For this his Augustinian and Thomistic influences ran too deep. And indeed, for Newman "universal knowledge" was not the indubitable knowledge of the Enlightenment.

Instead of the production of knowledge being what the university is really all about Newman speaks of the production of the "educated person," or as he sometimes says, the "gentleman." The "educated person" is not one who knows a lot only about a single subject matter, but one who also knows about how the universe is knit together. And for this he believed theology can help.

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9 See John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1959).

10 Ibid., 6.

Of course, Newman was not speaking directly into the realities of contemporary universities where theology has long not made it as part of the curriculum. He had not yet seen the full extent to which the separation of faith and reason, secular and religious, and theory and practice had its effects. This recognition with the appropriate laments came later with writers like Wendell Berry, who points out the level of abstraction in today's universities that eclipses the significance of lived practices from the search for knowledge, and John Milbank, who critiques the universities for their uncritical commitment to the binary thought of modernity.[11] In both cases, although very differently, they lament that the divorce of theory and practice in the universities today presupposes a pedagogy that is not conducive to shaping the kinds of people who are capable of seeing the world as gift; that is, a people capable of placing themselves under creator God and thereby in relationship to all of creation in a particular way.

Milbank believes that theology has lost its rightful place within the university because in a secular world religious faith has been relegated to the private personal realm and hence is no more relevant to scholarly enquiry than is the taste of tomatoes. But he asks whether a purely "secular" view of the universe is either interesting or truthful. A view of reason antithetical to religion has a very limited way of pushing important questions. For example, it has little capacity for seeing how everything holds together. It tends to assume that everything relates ultimately only to itself and hence is best understood in itself. And on this view to ask whether there is something in relation to which everything relates quickly becomes an unaskable question.

"Secular reason"—a phrase that Milbank uses to describe a way of thinking that is popular especially in the social and human sciences—must surely be interrogated. That is, he believes that it is not self-evidently true. This does not require a less rigorous academic pursuit but one even more arduous. It requires education in seeing the world in a manner that believes that there is more to reality than appears to us, even through a microscope. If we think of everything that exists as being only what it appears to be we have a rather flat view of the world. If we consider what we see as a matter of contingent fact which could be so much more if it were fully what it is, then we have a more robust and truthful view of the world. This does not deny the importance of "scientific" knowledge but it places such knowledge within a larger cosmological framework. And to "teach" within this setting requires a peculiar style of analysis and critique.

CMU is a university in the larger family of universities for which the subject matter discussed above is deeply important. Yet it would be false to suggest that how CMU places itself within this discussion is clearly known by the people who work there. It is not. As our mission states, "faithfulness to the story of God's creat-

11 See for example Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 23ff. See also John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1990).

ing and transforming work through Jesus Christ is the heartbeat, the mindfulness and the motivating impulse for the service, leadership and reconciliation through which CMU participates in church and society." This places us within the academic pursuit in a distinctive manner. It challenges us to both deeply appreciate and to interrogate the knowledge acquired from universities of which we are all products, universities which in some cases are very different from CMU.

It is important to remember that what this volume seeks to provide is not the development of a tightly argued pedagogy, for it believes that a university like CMU is not best served by a theory of education but by a community of teachers and staff committed to a vision in addition to a specialty. Hence, it is an effort to give faculty and staff the freedom to express how it is that they teach, or receive students, or administer, and how, in a few cases, it looks from the outside when university, church, and world share a common space.

## Conclusion

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. Moreover, it must do so within a manageable budget, only partially funded with public money.

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 with 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.

Furthermore, consider how we interrogate the world's failures and the universities' role in this process. Let me give three simple examples. Example #1: While the industrial and technological revolutions have brought much of the world great prosperity, they have also brought us crises pertaining to the disparity of wealth, to the environment, the capacities to do harm to one another, to the ability to prolong and terminate life, and so on. It is hard to overestimate the long term consequences of our failure to address these matters. Example #2: The problem of war as a resolution of conflicts. Of course war is always only justified as a last resort, but the "last" has so much to do with the imagination from which it is so judged. And the war imagination is not only the prerogative of nations. The rampant violence in our societies and the counter-violence which is to be its containment and resolution is evidence of a colossal failure by anyone's standards. Moreover, the lucrative arms

deals and the resources that are used to fund our nations' abilities to defend themselves may well provide security for some people but they have hardly provided the quality of life and security for all. Example #3: The problem of life's meaning. Alienation, relationship breakdown, and the quest for purposeful human existence is painfully evident especially among the youth of wealthy societies. It is hardly the quality of life of a successful people. It bespeaks major failure. And meaningless existence is exacerbated under all kinds of other conditions: the loss of the right to self-determination such as is found among the Aboriginal peoples; those who are the objects of racial exclusion and prejudice; those caught in political disputes rendering them displaced people and refugees through no fault of their own, and so on. The failure of meaning in the world today is a crisis of no ordinary proportions.

The challenge issued here is not only how these matters are to be resolved, as important as that may be, but the challenge is also a more fundamental one: where and how these failures are analyzed and into which imagination their quest for resolution is placed? To leave this to governments who are beholden to political power dynamics is clearly inadequate. Universities are important institutions that can inspire the younger generations to thoughtfully address these crises. It is not as though these matters are not already addressed in universities all over the world. They are, and that is as it ought to be. Yet this common task could well be strengthened. If our students are not taught to see the world more richly than in terms of individual freedom, prosperity, and power, and if this does not take place at our universities where imaginations are formed and reinforced, then where will the educated minds and the moral characters be shaped? The tendency in our day to separate the knowledge quest between the factual and the moral leaves us with a huge challenge. When moral failures are relegated to the personal realm we lose the capacity to give them the attention they deserve. The large universities' quest to cover every area of knowledge likewise diminishes the concern for this task. Small universities, with narrower mandates, can be well positioned to train and inspire a cohort of students to develop the wisdom and the passion to provide alternative analyses and solutions to today's failures.

The essays in this volume wrestle with these and other matters as a testimony to the legacy Gerbrandt has left because of the conviction that they belong with the community of scholars committed to think and to practice a life informed by love and the openness to God. And as such each chapter is an expression of gratitude for the invitation into a process of teaching students to see with the eyes of an educated mind, that is, to let the eyes of the university give sight to a hope born out of a passion for truth and justice. They are intended as gifts of appreciation.

February 1, 2016
Canadian Mennonite University

# Administrative Voices

# Leadership Preoccupations in Canada's Universities in the First Decade of the Twenty-first Century

*David T. Barnard*

## Introduction

It is an honour to have been invited to contribute to this collection in recognition of Gerald Gerbrandt's substantial contributions as a caring person, a scholar, and a leader. My focus will be on issues that were occupying the attention of the leaders of post-secondary institutions during the time that Gerald was a college and university president, approximately characterized in the title as the first decade of the century. My approach here is informal, based on sampling some of the many sources that can be used to gather such information, some targeted specifically at university presidents, others at a more general audience.

The large context in which that decade or so in Canada's higher education system needs to be considered is a process often described by the term *massification*. This somewhat clumsy term denotes the process of making something available to a very large audience. From roughly the middle of the last century, higher education has been going through such a process.

Prior to World War II university education was available to a relatively small percentage of people in the world, and this was certainly true in Canada. In general, an elite group in society had access to university. But starting with the needs of soldiers returning from the war, the university system in Canada began to grow, and has been growing dramatically for the past seventy years. Existing institutions accepted more students and new institutions were created. This has also been happening in most parts of the world, some of which have seen rapid development of national systems.[1]

1 "Higher education participation and enrolment has expanded considerably over the past

Post-secondary institutions are funded by the fees of those who attend, together with government grants. Those with government grants to fund their operation—to a greater or lesser degree—and accompanying government involvement in aspects of the governance or operation of the institution are generally referred to as *public* institutions. Those with no operating grants are called *private* institutions. Some private institutions are run by corporations intending to make money for investors, and are called *for profit* institutions.

The system of post-secondary education in Canada is largely public, with a few exceptions. The system in Canada has very good standards for operations and also for the results obtained, when compared to the great variety in the rest of the world, though all of us involved in it are aware of possible improvements.

Increasing access to a public system means increasing investments of public money generated from taxation. This creates a higher level of interest on the part of governments, since they are increasing their investments as the system grows. It also creates a higher level of interest among voters who are taxpayers and perhaps students or supporters of those who are students, because they too are asked to invest more. And, since there are more people using the system, expectations about results are more widespread.

We generally think about the post-secondary system as playing three roles in society: learning, discovery, and engagement. Students come to learn and the institution is expected to pass on what is known about the subjects being taught, and to help them develop as thinking citizens. The research or discovery role is expected continually to challenge what we think we know and to push the boundaries of what is known. For an institution to be engaged it must take what is known by its faculty and students, and apply that knowledge in the local community and into the wider world.

Since one aspect of the research activity is to transfer results out of the academy into the community, a growing research activity creates a greater interest on the part of the community on the generation of those results. Universities are closely tied to the social, cultural, and economic development of their surroundings.[2]

Presidents of these institutions lead the internal and external communities (as appropriate) in the process of creating a goal for their own set of circumstances,

century, and particularly since 1970. However, growth predicted over the 30 years from 2000–30 is likely to be higher than that experienced between 1970 and 2000. The number of students enrolled in higher education by 2030 is forecast to rise from 99.4 million in 2000 to 414.2 million in 2030—an increase of 314%. This growth is being fueled by the transformation that we are witnessing in the developing and emerging regions and countries of the world—a growth that will only accelerate in the next decades." Angel Calderon, "Massification Continues to Transform Higher Education", September 2, 2012, *University World News*, www.universityworldnews.com.

2 In particular, Richard Florida sees economic growth occurring where "technology, talent and tolerance" are found in a community, and he sees a close alignment between that triplet and the presence of universities. Richard Florida, "The Flight of the Creative Class: The New Global Competition for Talent," *Harper Business,* 2007.

and then finding and matching resources to the priorities that have been defined. In response to each institution's history, present circumstances, and aspirations, these can be expected to vary considerably, even though there are commonalities.

It is easy to see that in such a dynamic environment there will be stresses and that the aggregate of the expectations will be difficult to meet with the resources that are available. So what do presidents of these institutions spend their time thinking and talking about? At the end of this brief overview, I present a description of some sources of information (periodicals, books, electronic resources). The following list of issues is based on an informal review of these sources.

## Internationalization

Post-secondary institutions have been preoccupied with internationalization in its various aspects,[3] attracting students from abroad to broaden the educational experience for domestic students, providing opportunities for students from elsewhere and (in some jurisdictions) increasing revenues by charging higher fees, providing opportunities for Canadian students to go abroad, building international research collaborations, and participating in development projects. Internationalization is a recurring theme in the AUCC President's Letters: finding partners abroad, working with governments on the regulations associated with international students, recognizing foreign-earned credits, marketing abroad, and branding Canada.

## Learning

As the system and the financial pressures faced by institutions have grown, so has concern about the quality of the learning experience: large classes, professors possibly distracted by the pressure to generate research results and publications, the use of technology to enhance courses or perhaps even to replace the standard style of offering them. It is certainly true that the expectations of students have changed over time.[4] The AUCC President's Letters return to this theme frequently:

3 See F. King Alexander and Kern Alexander, eds., *The University: International Expectations,* rev. ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).

4 See Derek Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Clayton M. Christensen, Michael B. Horn, and Curtis W. Johnson, *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns* (Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill, 2008); James E. Côté and Anton L. Allahar, *Ivory Tower Blues: A University System in Crisis* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Gerald Graff, *How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Neil Howe and William Strauss "Millennials Go to College," *Lifecourse Associates*, 2007; George D. Kuh, Jillian Kinzie, John H. Schuh, and Elizabeth J.Whitt, *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010); Henry Mintzberg, *Managers Not MBAs: A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005); Jeff Rybak, *What's Wrong with University: And How to Make It Work for You Anyway* (Toronto, ON: ECW Press, 2007); M. Night Shyamalan, *I Got Schooled: The Unlikely Story of How a Moonlighting Movie Maker Learned the Five Keys to Closing America's Education Gap* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

the needs of students; expectations of employers, parents, and governments; the need for good data about employment opportunities; and the particular needs of indigenous students in Canada. Although it applies to more than just the learning environment, I include here the focus in the Letters on the collaborative site licensing of electronic resources (journals, etc.) for students and faculty members. And there is the complementary reality of the changing use of printed material, and the evolving situation during the past several years of how copyrighted material can be used in universities and how to pay for it.

## Tuition

In some public systems students pay a very small percentage of the cost of their programs, in some systems the percentage is larger, and in private systems tuition can be much higher than in public systems. Institutions always face pressure from students and their families—and often also from local governments—to keep costs down. It is a matter of considerable debate as to how much is reasonable, how costs should be offset by merit-based and needs-based awards from institutions, how public policy should be formed, and what impact fees have on attendance and persistence. It is disappointing that much of the discussion about student financing focuses on cost rather than value. Further, the discussion is made even more simplistic when the only focus in the discussion about cost is tuition fees, whereas the substantial costs of attending university include the cost of living and the cost of forgone income during the program.[5]

## Government Investment

The complement to fees paid by students is the grants given by government in public systems. With growth in the system, the level of investment has risen although not so fast as many institutions and their presidents would like. Governments have a legitimate concern about this rate, which in many jurisdictions exceeds the rate of growth of other government expenditures, so the competition for public funds can be intense. In response, institutions try to find ways to control costs, including the popular program prioritization process. In a complementary manner, governments are attempting different—sometimes radically different—approaches to funding.[6] In

5 See Ronald G. Ehrenberg, *Tuition Rising: Why College Costs So Much* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 2008); Ross Finnie, Richard E. Mueller, Arthur Sweetman, and Alex Usher, *Who Goes? Who Stays? What Matters? Accessing and Persisting in Post-Secondary Education in Canada* (Montreal, QC: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2008); Ken Ilgunas, *Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom* (Boston, MS: New Harvest/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013); David Laidler, *Renovating the Ivory Tower* (Toronto, ON: C.D. Howe Institute, 2002).

6 See Jonathan R. Cole, "The Great American University: Its Rise to Preeminence, Its Indispensable National Role, Why It Must Be Protected," *Public Affairs,* 2010; Robert C. Dickeson, *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services: Reallocating Resources to Achieve Strategic Balance,* 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010); Frank Iacobucci and Carolyn Tuohy, eds., *Taking Public Universities Seriously* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money Markets and the Future of Higher Education* (London: Pluto Press, 2013).

Canada, education is a provincial responsibility, but the federal government is the principal supporter of research in universities. The AUCC President's Letters deal with many aspects of this: advocating for support for the federal granting councils that support the majority of university research, support for the full entailed costs of research, and support for big science projects and other collaborative activities. The Letters also address concerns about gender equity in some targeted programs, the evolution of the granting councils and their programs, and the ongoing development of ethical standards for research. The federal government also provides money for infrastructure expenditures in the country, and the AUCC Letters deal with the participation of universities in the Knowledge Infrastructure Program. The Letters also deal with some aspects of government support through scholarships for individual students.

## Fundraising

Working with alumni, foundations, governments, private benefactors, and corporations has become a much larger part of the work of most presidents than it was in the past. It can be particularly challenging in that it is quite different from other aspects of the work and is often not connected to the president's previous experience.[7]

## Fiction

This doesn't quite fit in this list, but there is a steady stream of novels set in universities and colleges, some of them written with a deep understanding of these institutions—and some of those are sympathetic treatments, others less so. Rather than make reference to any of them I refer you to Elaine Showalter's work as an entry point for this literature.[8]

## Humanities

One of the ongoing concerns in our institutions is the perceived devaluing of the humanities by many who have come to see post-secondary education as simply a way to acquire skills in preparation for finding a job. The idea of liberal education seems to need advocates anew in every generation.[9]

## Economic Benefit

As enrolment in the post-secondary system has grown, and as the costs have risen for participants, there is an increasing focus on the economic utility of higher education. While many resist this as a dangerous simplification, it is clear that universities

7 See Peter McE. Buchanan, *Handbook of Institutional Advancement* (New York: CASE Books, 2000).

8 See Elaine Showalter, *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

9 See Marjorie Garber, *Academic Instincts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Harry R. Lewis, "Excellence Without a Soul: Does Liberal Education Have a Future?" *Public Affairs*, 2007.

do have an economic impact in their communities and regions. The system itself in some ways is under pressure to produce economic benefits, and this causes stress.[10]

## Academic Freedom

Academic freedom, autonomy, and accountability are important principles for universities; faculty members should be free to follow the truth of their disciplines wherever it leads them, this must be possible independent of interference from outside agencies including government, as institutions are ultimately accountable to the public for their actions. Some worry that academic freedom is under assault, others that it can be used as a shield for bad behaviour. Some worry that there can be implicit "orthodoxies" on campus that limit freedom, while it is certainly true that faculty can behave in bullying ways with respect to the academic content of their disciplines as well as to more general behaviour. Balancing freedom and responsibility is an ongoing challenge in this sphere as in others.[11] The President's Letters also deal with university autonomy.

## Memoirs and Overviews

These books, some by outstanding leaders in the sector, deal with a variety of topics.[12]

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10 See Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges*; Ian D. Clark, Greg Moran, Michael L. Skolnik, and David Trick, eds., *Academic Transformation: The Forces Reshaping Higher Education in Ontario*, (Kingston ON: Queen's Policy Studies, 2009); Ian D. Clark, David Trick and Richard Van Loon, *Academic Reform: Policy Options for Improving the Quality and Cost-effectiveness of Undergraduate Education in Ontario* (Kingston, ON: Queen's Policy Studies, 2011); Florida, "The Flight of the Creative Class," Lorlene Hoyt, ed., *Transforming Cities and Minds through the Scholarship of Engagement: Economy, Equity, and Environment* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2013); Rómulo Piheiro, Paul Benneworth and Glen A. Jones, eds., *Universities and Regional Development: A Critical Assessment of Tensions and Contradictions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

11 See Paul Bidwell and Len M. Findlay, *Pursuing Academic Freedom: "Free and Fearless"* (Saskatoon, SK: Purich, 2001); David Alexander Downs, *Restoring Free Speech and Liberty on Campus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); David Horowitz and Jacob Laksin, *One-Party Classroom: How Radical Professors at America's Top Colleges Indoctrinate Students and Undermine Our Democracy* (Danvers, MA: Crown Forum, 2009); *Closed Minds? Politics and Ideology in American Universities* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008); William G. Tierney and Vicente M. Lechuga, *Restructuring Shared Governance in Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004); Darla J. Twale and Barbara M. De Luca, *Faculty Incivility: The Rise of the Academic Bully Culture and What to Do About It* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

12 See Derek Bok, *Higher Education in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); James J. Duderstadt and Farris W. Womack, *The Future of the Public University in America: Beyond the Crossroads* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); James J. Duderstadt, *A University for the 21st Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2000); Clark Kerr, *The Gold and the Blue: A Personal Memoir of the University of California 1949–1967: 1. Academic Triumphs, 2. Political Turmoil* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2001 and 2004); Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University,* 5th ed. (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 2001); Richard C. Levin, *The Work of the University* (New Haven CN: Yale University

## Returning to Roots

Many public institutions in Canada that were established more than a few decades ago came out of faith traditions, usually different Christian denominations. Although many of them no longer are responsible to the faith communities that conceived and nurtured them, some still have affiliated colleges that are connected to faith communities. But the circumstances in many academic circles have not been accepting of religion—and Christianity in particular—as a legitimate component of academic life and debate. However, there is a lively literature suggesting that this has gone too far, and that there is a legitimate place for religion and its worldview in the academy.[13]

## Presidency

In the midst of all the change, the pressures on presidents have grown. The difficulty for boards in finding a president that fits with the institution and the board is evidenced by the number of Canadian university presidents who have left their positions very soon after their appointments.[14] The President's Letters provide regular reminders of the ongoing series of professional development seminars that it provides for presidents, especially new presidents. And in spite of all that is going on in our sector, when AUCC conducts its periodic surveys about satisfaction with and confidence in the system, members of the public indicate a higher level of confidence in universities than in most other aspects of our common life in Canada.

Of course, in addition to these large issues, there is the ongoing operation of the institution that needs attention: making plans, establishing budgets, managing people and relationships, dealing with media, working with student leaders, participating in the academic senate, participating on the institution's board, meeting alumni, attending concerts and sporting events and important lectures—a president's life is neither empty nor boring. Our institutions give us many opportunities to appreciate the deep humanity of those involved, the commitment to doing good, and the excitement of learning and then applying what we have learned.

## Conclusion

This is the context in which I knew Gerald Gerbrandt as a colleague. Because my

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Press, 2003); Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 2008).

13 See Stanley Hauerwas, *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007); Douglas V. Henry and Michael D. Beaty, eds., *Christianity and the Soul of the University: Faith as a Foundation for Intellectual Community* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (Oxford University Press, 2004); Todd C. Ream and Perry L. Glanzer, *Christian Faith and Scholarship: An Exploration of Contemporary Developments* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

14 See Ross H. Paul, *Leadership Under Fire: The Challenging Role of the Canadian University President* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

time as President at the University of Manitoba overlapped with Gerald's tenure as President at Canadian Mennonite University, we participated together in the occasional meetings of the Council of Presidents of Universities in Manitoba (COPUM) and also in the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). From the perspectives of different kinds of institutions, we struggled with the same set of issues. I found him always to be thoughtful, gracious, wise, and measured. We talked about our work and we talked about books we were reading. I learned from him. I consider it a privilege to have served with him. On one occasion we talked about the works of the theologian Walter Brueggemann. In one of his published prayers Brueggemann addresses these words to God: "Just when we imagine that we have you figured out you show up working the other side of the street in your frightening freedom."[15] That "frightening freedom" of the unknown future is the milieu in which we carry out our shared work in the academy, as in other aspects of our lives.

### *Appendix: A Word about Resources*

*Local and national media:* Given the importance of post-secondary education, there is a great deal of coverage, especially in communities where institutions are located. National publications and broadcast media have many stories about universities in general and specific universities when important or controversial things are happening. Some of this is thoughtful and informed.

*Regular mailings and blogs:* In Canada, two are particularly widely read. Today's Top Ten, from Academica Group, found at *http://academica.ca/topten* or accessed as a daily email subscription. The daily product has brief descriptions of "relevant, interesting and important stories" about post-secondary education. These are drawn from many media sources across the country (and some internationally) and are presented without evaluative commentary. But they serve as a good indication of the concerns of governments, institutions, students, sector lobby groups, and so on. *One Thought for the Day,* produced by Higher Education Strategy Associates, found at *http://higheredstrategy.com/blog/* or accessed as a daily email subscription. Alex Usher, the President of HESA, writes a brief commentary on a specific topic, frequently some recently published data source, book, or study, or some public statement of note. He is thoughtful and extremely direct.

*The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)* represents the country's universities and affiliated colleges. It provides several sources of material to its members, and particularly to presidents. After Gerald Gerbrandt's association with this organization (in 2015) it was renamed as Universities Canada.

15 Walter Brueggeman, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 13.

*University Affairs* is a magazine available online and in printed form, published most months of the year. It contains "news, commentary, in-depth articles on a wide range of topics, and career advice for academics" as well as advertisements for academic and administrative positions in member institutions.

*The periodic "President's Letter"* is a letter from the President of AUCC to the presidents of member institutions. The presidents meet semi-annually for a couple of days, and standing committees meet as required, but between meetings the newsletter keeps the membership current on activities being carried out by the organization.

# Academic Freedom and the Idea of the University

*Earl Davey*

## Introduction

While the idea of academic freedom is broadly viewed within the academy as foundational to the idea and operation of the university, it is also manifestly evident that the principle of unfettered scholarship, whether teaching or research, is contested on multiple fronts. It is equally evident that the challenge to academic freedom is part of a much broader set of queries regarding the nature of the university in the twenty-first century. What follows is a brief exploration of the philosophical principles that undergird the concept of academic freedom, an examination of various fronts on which this principle and its practice is being challenged, and the proposition of an alternate model of practicing academic freedom in the context of a community of scholars—a model that protects the necessary commitment to robust intellectual life while endorsing and embodying a commitment and responsibility to the other.

While the concept and practice of academic freedom can be traced to medieval European universities such as Paris, Bologna, Oxford, and Heidelberg, the modern concept now recognized as foundational to the academy is rooted in the idea of human freedom articulated in the political philosophy of the seventeenth century. This principle, often expressed in terms of liberty of the individual from coercion or interference, was famously framed by Isaiah Berlin as negative and positive senses of freedom: freedom from interference from others, and alternatively, freedom understood as a life guided by others to a particular good.[1] The former

1 Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958), in Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1.

focuses on the right of the individual to control his or her own destiny, while the latter is oriented to the exercise of liberty for the common good. The competing values of autonomy and heteronomy, and the good of the individual over against the good of society have been foundational to competing ideologies that have marked the political landscape of modern democracies. While the existence of the two claims structured as they are necessarily precludes the possibility that each can be fully accommodated, Berlin quite rightly reminds us that each "has an equal right to be classed among the deepest interests of mankind."[2]

## The "Negative" Sense of Academic Freedom

Faculty in Western universities and the political bodies that represent them give regular witness to an authentic concern for and commitment to students and the good of society; at the same time they are typically deeply committed to the so-called "negative" thesis of academic freedom, a position linked to the philosophical presupposition asserted by Kant that "the right" takes priority over "the good." Michael Sandel states the thesis this way: "society, being composed of a plurality of persons, each with his own aims, interests, and conceptions of the good, is best arranged when it is governed by principles that do not themselves presuppose any particular conception of the good; what justifies these regulative principles above all is not that they maximize the social welfare or otherwise promote the good, but rather that they conform to the concept of the *right*, a moral category given prior to the good and independent of it."[3] This logic leads to the privileging of justice and individual rights within a liberal democracy both as *sine qua non* and as a first principle. At the same time, the practical outworking of a social order gives rise to the need for limitations of individual freedom for the sake and protection of the many. Indeed, the history of liberal democracies has been one of constant negotiation around the competing demands of individual rights over against the welfare of the whole. We see evidence of this tension in the writings of John Stuart Mill. Having argued that the claim of individual rights ought to assume "that character of absoluteness, that apparent infinity, and incommensurability with all other considerations,"[4] he retreats from this position to concede that there may indeed be instances "in which some other social duty is so important as to overrule any one of the general maxims of justice."[5] In practice and theory, liberal democracies have always negotiated their understanding of individual freedom against the limitation of such in order to protect the common good.

2 Ibid., 28–29.

3 Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

4 J.S. Mill, cited in Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 3.

5 Ibid., 5.

Berlin asks why the guarding of individual liberty is of such importance to Mill and others. The fact is that the commitment of liberalism to the sanctity of individual rights does not rest solely on a high view of the autonomous will of the rational being. The heart of Mill's conviction is that the right of the individual to act independently is a necessary condition if a society is to flourish. It is a good to an end. To sustain this argument he points to Eastern cultures which he takes to have stagnated as a consequence of the repression of the individual. These he compares to European societies which in his mind flourish because human variance and individuality is cultivated.[6] Accordingly, Mill argues, "All the errors which a man is likely to commit against advice and warning are far outweighed by the evil of allowing others to constrain him to what they deem his good."[7] Berlin frames Mill's view of liberty this way: unless the individual is left to live and function in a manner that is unconstrained by the wishes and desires of others, "civilization cannot advance: the truth will not, for lack of a free market in ideas, come to light; there will be no scope for spontaneity, originality, genius, for mental energy, for moral courage. Society will be crushed by the weight of 'collective mediocrity.'"[8] The welfare of the culture demands the unfettered activity and productivity of the individual.

Among the most compelling arguments for the negative view of academic freedom is that constructed by Ronald Dworkin, who speaks of "two levels of insulation" that pertain to the academic and her or his freedom: freedom from political and economic bodies that would and do wield influence as they are able, and freedom from administrators within the universities who have control over budgets and influence over faculty appointments, workload assignments, and curriculum. Dworkin reminds his readers that while academic freedom is related to the more general democratic value of freedom of speech, there are features of the former that extend beyond the latter in important ways. "The conventional justification of academic freedom," he says, "treats it as instrumental in the discovery of truth." That is, "we have a better chance of discovering what is true . . . if we leave our academics and their institutions free from external control to the greatest degree possible."[9] This is the core of the argument offered by the American Association of University Professors. The Association's foundational document, the "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," includes three essential points in its definition of academic freedom: (1)teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results; (2) freedom in the

6 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), 67–69.

7 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 1, 226, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto/London, 1963–91), vol.18. Cited in Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, 127.

8 Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 127.

9 Ronald Dworkin, "We Need a New Interpretation of Academic Freedom," in Louis Menand, ed., *The Future of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 185.

classroom in discussing their subject, with the proviso that they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject; and (3) freedom to speak or write as citizens free from institutional censorship or discipline. The benefit of according such freedom to university faculty is enhancement of the common good which "depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition."[10]

For Dworkin, this instrumental value proposition—academic freedom supports the creation of knowledge and truth that is good for us all—though legitimate, constitutes an inadequate rationale for academic freedom. To begin, it is conceivable, he suggests, that this instrumental value could be achieved more efficiently if academic freedom were at times abrogated in favour of greater control and direction over production and focus of energies and research pursuits. Instead, Dworkin identifies the critical issue as the need for "ethical individualism." For a society to experience freedom persons must accept responsibility to act on "felt personal convictions." In his view, freedom of speech and academic freedom are essential to the life of the university if faculty are to exercise their responsibility for critical individualism without fetter or fear of recrimination. "Professors and others who teach and study in universities," he says, "have a paradigmatic duty to discover and teach what they find important and true."[11] The principle value of the exercising of this ethical individualism is the cultivation and protection of "a culture of independence" as opposed to "a culture of conformity." Dworkin's conviction that personal liberty will ultimately lead to the common good reaches so deep as to permit him to argue that the university constitutes "a theater in which personal conviction about truth and value is all that matters, and it trains scholars and students alike in the skills and attitudes essential to a culture of independence." [12]

Whether authentic liberty is in fact best cultivated in an environment so radically centred on the unencumbered self, even a self committed to acting upon personal conviction, is certainly open to interrogation. That aside, the social context in which the universities now find themselves seems increasingly suspicious of the idea that the culture of independence and the freedom accorded to universities and to university faculty will lead to an enhanced social good.

## Threats from Within and Without

In "The Limits of Academic Freedom," Louis Menand makes the obvious yet startling assertion that "coercion is natural: freedom is artificial." "Freedoms," he says "are artificially engineered spaces in which parties engaged in specified

10 American Association of University Professors, "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments," http://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure.

11 Dworkin, "We Need a New Interpretation of Academic Freedom," 189.

12 Ibid., 190.

pursuits enjoy protection from parties who otherwise would naturally seek to interfere in those pursuits."[13] With respect to the academy it is evident that these spaces are increasingly encroached upon both by internal and external agents. To begin, the sociopolitical context in which Western universities find themselves has changed. The lofty place of privilege once marked by public deference and a broad acceptance of the legitimate autonomy of universities has clearly given way to a persistent critique of the university and its contribution to society. And while these institutions and their spokespersons may argue their essential place as the primary institutional medium for "conserving, understanding, extending, and handing on to subsequent generations the intellectual, scientific and artistic heritage of mankind,"[14] those of us within the academy are acutely aware that we are in a time of "unprecedented skepticism about the benefits and the intellectual material of the universities, and the university education."[15] In a lecture entitled "The Very Idea of the University," Stefan Collini (Professor of English, Cambridge University) tells us what we already well understand: while in some environments "universities are heralded as engines of technological advance and economic prosperity, elsewhere they are attacked for being self-indulgent, backward-looking or elitist."[16] And, where the university is under siege, the concept of academic freedom is certainly viewed with suspicion.[17] The period during which the universities could hope to operate in a manner largely separate from the world and the undue influence of governments, business, and public opinion has passed.[18] Moreover, not only is the idea of the university as an autonomous entity

13 Louis Menand, "The Limits of Academic Freedom," in Louis Menand, ed., *The Future of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3.

14 Stefan Collini, lecture entitled "The Very Idea of the University," delivered at Lady Mitchell Hall, Cambridge University on October 11, 2011, http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/events/1804/.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 See Richard Rorty, "Does Academic Freedom Have Philosophical Presuppositions?" In Louis Menand, ed., *The Future of Academic Freedom*, 21. "As Americans use the term, 'academic freedom' names some complicated local folkways that have developed in the course of the past century, largely as a result of battles fought by the American Association of University Professors. These customs and traditions insulate colleges and universities from politics and from public opinion. In particular, they insulate teachers from pressure from the public bodies or private boards who pay their wages."

18 One might look to the grand political agenda of the Bologna Project that has pressed hundreds of universities throughout the European Union and their faculty to conformity in order to remake higher education in Europe—all this for the purpose of creating a coherent system of comparable degrees with compatible credit systems ensuring free mobility of students, teachers and administrators, and a European mechanism for quality assurance. And while this strategic focus on systems does not preclude continued attention to the work of authentic and autonomous intellectual enquiry, it begs the question whether in fact the substantial work of the university is increasingly understood to lie in its contribution to a stable, economically

a matter of debate in many quarters, it is simply a fact that academic freedom is not viewed as an inalienable right, and this is as evident within the academy as it is without.

In the Canadian context it seems evident that as the educative intent of the universities diverges from vocational training and the preparation of "skilled" workers for the marketplace, the relevance of the universities is challenged. And where this is the case, the rhetoric of academic freedom is heard as the language of a privileged class of self-indulgent and self-serving persons who claim for themselves an inordinate position and a prerogative greater than their contribution warrants. Evidence of the increasingly contentious place of privilege the universities are seen to occupy is abundant, but perhaps reference to a recent flurry of public comment will suffice to make the point. In a budget speech in March of 2013, Canada's Minister of Finance made the point, now commonplace in political parlance, that,"Training in Canada is not sufficiently aligned with the skills employers need. Or, to the jobs that are actually available."[19] To this, John Manley, a former minister of finance and the current president of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, responded by asserting the necessity that Canada develop "a comprehensive strategy to better align education and training with the skills employers need."[20] Gwyn Morgan, a business columnist for the *Globe and Mail*, suggests that in order for such realignment to occur, the universities need to accept the responsibility to shift monies toward programs and faculty that generate skilled workers where such workers are needed. This suggestion is accompanied by a lament which is recorded here precisely because it echoes popular sentiment: "Such a strategy may sound obvious. But at Canadian universities, the dominant player in post-secondary education, consulting with business and allocating resources to fields where skilled workers are desperately needed runs counter to a culture of academic freedom. Faculty unions fiercely defend an insular, professor-centered paradigm that turns away thousands of students applying to skills-short fields, while graduating huge numbers from programs with dismal employment prospects."[21]

Whatever the disposition of the broader public to the university and to the concept and practice of academic freedom, encroachments on the academic free-

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progressive and productive common market, that is, in its instrumental value rather than its more erudite functions. Certainly the "rights" of many individuals have been overrode in order to accommodate the objective of a structural coherence across Europe.

19 Full transcript of Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's 2013 budget speech by Nick Taylor-Vaisey on Thursday, March 21, 2013, 4:25pm, http://www2.macleans.ca/2013/03/21/finance-minister-jim-flaherty-we-are- well-placed-to-prosper.

20 "Federal Budget Will Improve Skills Training, but Developing Modern and Efficient Labour Markets Requires Ongoing Commitment, Say Business Leaders," http://www.ceocouncil.ca/news-item/budget-news-release.

21 Gwyn Morgan, "Radical Re-financing Proposal Would Ease Skills Shortage," in *The Globe and Mail*, Monday, April 15, 2013, B12.

dom of faculty remains predominantly an internal matter. Without question the public discourse that views the university as disinterested or disengaged from the needs of the "real" world creates significant pressure on these institutions and their administrators to demonstrate the specific contribution of the universities to the social good. Moreover, the ubiquitous climate of financial strain and the constant pressure to reduce expenditures in order to balance budgets inclines administrators to take action that is coercive and seen to unduly constrain individual faculty members and departments. Such decisions include adjustments to faculty workload and courses taught, the restructuring of curriculum and programs delivered, and at times the complete elimination of programs and departments. Moreover, as universities rely increasingly on donor support there are increasing complexities to be navigated concerning the desire of donors to influence the operations of the academy. That said, much of the ongoing challenge to academic freedom is the consequence of fraternal conflict, that is, conflict among peers. Universities are rife with complaints about departmental strife, and about faculty exerting pressure on colleagues related to their teaching or research —"Quantitative versus qualitative, positivist versus metahistorical, Robertsonian versus Levi-Straussian, realist versus Leo Straussian: the academic life has always been an endless series of turf battles."[22]

Within the academy limitations to academic freedom often entail limitations to freedom of speech, a principle assumed to be essential to the freedom to teach and to function within the academy. Of course not all speech acts are considered reasonable or acceptable within the university or without. Speech acts that are likely to incite violence and result in the bodily harm of another are understood to be unacceptable in a liberal democracy; but what of the expression of opinion or fact that would lead to the psychological diminishment of another, or harm their character or reputation, even if well-founded? Advocates for freedom of speech would likely view the former as problematic, while prohibition in the case of the latter may well be viewed as an unreasonable restriction on the freedom of speech. Dennis Hayes provides a catalogue of cases in which academics or students have found themselves in jeopardy as a consequence of expressing their views: Laurence Summers (Harvard), Frank Ellis (Leeds), Sal Fiore (Wolverhampton), Gary McLennan and John Hookham (Queensland University of Technology), and Hicham Yezza (Nottingham), all of whom "fell foul of feminist outrage, anti-racist staff and student campaigners, postmodernism, management attitudes, and government-promoted hysteria."[23] Many have discovered there can be harsh consequences for voicing a principled objection to accepted wisdom or practice, or merely being a contrarian.

Increasingly in this age in which the university is dominated by the agenda of mass education, vocational and professional training, and "big science," the

22 Louis Menand, *The Future of Academic Freedom*, 10.

23 Dennis Hayes, "Academic Freedom and the Diminished Subject," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 57 no. 2 (2009): 128.

concepts of institutional autonomy and academic freedom seem like vestiges of a time past. The threats are both external and internal, from public media, business and government, and from accrediting agencies, university administration, and in the case of academic freedom, from faculty themselves. Moreover the universities have for decades been complicit with external agencies whose support has always been contingent upon the exercise of influence, including, at times, limiting the rights of faculty to publish the results of their scholarship. The universities can no longer claim a place of disinterested scholarship, independent of the rough streets outside its gates and manicured lawns. And yet one cannot help but call to memory the caution offered by Richard Rorty: "The one thing that has proved worse than letting the university order its own affairs—letting its members quarrel constantly and indecisively about what shall count as science or as scholarship—is letting somebody else order those affairs."[24]

## A Way Forward

What is suggested here is a way forward that centres on the idea of the university as community and asks how we can understand and engage in the practice of academic freedom within communities in which there is an intentional embrace of the "other." This reworking or reframing of the concept of academic freedom necessarily involves reassessment of the questions of freedom—to what end and freedom for whom—and assumes that such freedom will have an end that extends beyond the individual. That end or purpose may include and perhaps begin with happiness, one's own happiness as a free agent; but such happiness must always be contingent for it can never be experienced independently of its social context. To put the matter differently, a perspective that places a high value on community and embrace of the "other" requires that the concept of academic freedom, if it is to have a compelling legitimacy as concept and practice, must be understood as freedom both to live a good life and as freedom to serve.

This then sounds very much like the positive thesis posed by Isaiah Berlin—individual freedom guided by a purpose other than the mere prerogative of the unfettered individual. True freedom must always and necessarily not only be constrained but directed by the common good. It is the link to community, however defined, that provides guidance to the particularity of that good in time and place. In community the choices and actions of the individual, however imaginative and extraordinary, are always taken in the relation to others and require the counsel of others if the environment is to be truly free. By definition freedom involves the curbing of appetite and the ordering of desires if the actions of one are not to impede the life and interests of another. More importantly, if the story of one's life is always embedded in the narratives of others then demonstration of the virtues of love and humility are critical to the welfare of the whole. This is without question as relevant to the life of the university as it is to any community, neighbourhood,

24 Rorty, "Does Academic Freedom Have Philosophical Presuppositions?" 28–29.

or tribe. Individually and collectively we hold responsibility for the cultivation of virtues which contribute to our happiness as individuals and for the happiness and well-being of others with whom we share our lives, our social, political, and earthly environment. However, the framework proposed here for exercising liberty in community is different in significant measure from Berlin's "positive" sense of academic freedom. For in the intentional and authentic community envisioned here individual choice is not marked by coercion even for the purposes of an agreed and valued end. Rather the exercise of freedom is undertaken in a context that values and privileges life together where the well-being of the other can never truly be separated from one's own well-being, from one's own freedom. In this view, nothing is so desperately to be feared than to succeed in the desire to become autonomous, to be ruled by reason and reason alone, "to act and not be acted upon." [25]

A helpful counterpoint to the insistent call for an unbridled individualism in the university is offered by Edward Said, who asks a critical question: "What kind of authority, what sort of human norms, what kind of identity do we allow to lead us, to guide our study, to dictate our educational processes?"[26] As he reflects on liberation movements and the place of the academic, he asks whether having "achieved equality and independence," we are now inclined to "elevate ourselves, our history, our culture or ethnic identity above that of others." Moreover, he insists that universities exist in complex social and political environments such that no university can be genuinely free of encumbrances—"the problems, the social dynamics of its surrounding environment." [27] And so, he lays claim to a noble enterprise: rather than staking the territory of the liberated, unfettered self, and the knowledge that might be constructed or uncovered as a consequence of such free reign of the intelligence, he advocates a model of academic freedom that involves "this joint discovery of self and Other."[28] "It is," he says, "the role of the academy to transform what might be conflict, or contest, or assertion into reconciliation, mutuality, recognition, and creative interaction." [29] This we take to be altogether consonant with the Anabaptist vision of justice and peacemaking, and with that community's theological framing of the university as community committed to the embrace of the "other."

The magnificence of the university lies precisely in its structure as a learned community in which the disciplines that constitute the heart of the university are understood as "communities of the competent." It is in community that we as scholars work, study, imagine, and write as "free" persons, but also as persons who

25 Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, 138.

26 Edward Said, "Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler," in Louis Menand, ed., *The Future of Academic Freedom*, 223.

27 Ibid., 224.

28 Ibid., 227.

29 Ibid.

subject one another to the scrutiny deserving of a colleague. Moreover we build an understanding of our disciplines collectively. The work of one generation stands on the shoulders of those before it, both in the acceptance, modification, and extension of previous knowledge, or its outright rejection in favour of alternate paths. All of this is merely to note that in spite of the divisiveness and conflict that often marks such institutions, universities do function as communities, in fact as elite communities rather like the Greek polis or citizen state, or as Gordon Zerbe puts it, the "citizen-community."[30] The concept of community is critical here, for it is as a discerning community that universities establish mission, values, and the fraternal relationships that are essential to the common good. The university community though committed to academic freedom—the freedom to teach and engage in scholarship without undue limitation—is nonetheless a community which has always placed limits on the individual. It is after all the nature of community to subjugate to some degree the will and freedom of the individual for the purposes of the common good.

In his discussion of economic justice—that is, the just and equitable distribution of goods and services—Michael Walzer offers some helpful insight into the nature of what he calls "communities of character." "The idea of distributive justice," Walzer says, "presupposes a bounded world within which distributions take place: a group of people committed to dividing, exchanging, and sharing social goods, first of all among themselves."[31] But as Walzer points out, non-members are decidedly vulnerable in such an environment. Moreover, as members we must decide criteria for membership and whom we admit. With respect to such communities, Walzer argues that "Admission and exclusion are at the core of communal independence. Without them, there could not be *communities of character*."[32] Vital to this discussion is the corollary to the assertion of the right to limit membership—a corollary that demands inclusiveness in such communities. That is to say, "It is only as members somewhere" that persons can share in the "social goods—security, wealth, honour, office, and power—that communal life makes possible."[33] For this to be so, members must both rule and, in turn, be ruled. An ethic of fraternity is critical to the healthy functioning and order of such a community: "Mutual respect and a shared self-respect are the deep strengths of complex equality, and together they are the source of its possible endurance." [34] In authentic community members both rule and are ruled in a context of mutual respect and self-respect. It may be a modest beginning, but much of the conflict that marks university communities would be substantially

30 Gordon Zerbe, *Citizenship: Paul on Peace and Politics* (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Mennonite University Press, 2012), 4.

31 Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (Basic Books, 1983), 31.

32 Ibid., 62.

33 Ibid., 63.

34 Ibid., 321.

diminished if together we were able to recover the mutual caring that is the heart of civil discourse and healthy community.

This reflection leads us back to Edward Said's notion of the university as a transformative community, and the assumption that the renewed purposes for the university of reconciliation and "creative interaction" do not merely constitute a different intellectual agenda; they assume an alternate agenda undertaken by persons with a radically reframed mindset. That is, this agenda assumes a transformative process within the institution, and the transformation of persons within the academic community. The question is whether the university or whether some universities can in fact become places marked in this way. Both Sandel (*Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*) and MacIntyre (*After Virtue*) view community as a context in which persons are shaped, or better yet in which persons work together toward the objective of constructing individual and corporate identities that constitute a mature personhood. MacIntyre argues that we "live out our lives, both individually and in our relationships with each other, in the light of certain conceptions of a possible shared future, a future in which certain possibilities beckon us forward and others repel us."[35] In a society committed to the good life for mankind, we recognize that "I am not only accountable, I am one who can always ask others for an account, who can put others to the question. I am part of their story, as they are part of mine."[36]

Now MacIntyre makes the point that for those committed to a liberal individualism, "community is simply an arena in which individuals each pursue their own self-chosen conception of the good life."[37] But this, he suggests, fails to recognize that "we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives."[38] And so it is that "the self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities such as family, the neighbourhood, the city and the tribe."[39] Such a community insists on a commitment to fraternity, a commitment to interdependence that recognizes that freedom and liberty must always be understood both in terms of selfhood—personal identity—and the interface and interaction of the self with others. This view stands as a radical alternative to the individualism of Dworkin and many others who postulate the notion of "negative" freedom as the very basis of scholarship and life in the academy.

## Conclusion

Edward Said's suggestion that the academy consider the contribution it might make to transformation of conflict and the common good is highly consonant

35 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 215.

36 Ibid., 218.

37 Ibid., 195.

38 Ibid., 213.

39 Ibid., 221.

with the perspective of a number of North American universities located in the Anabaptist tradition. In these communities we are reminded that loving God includes the imperative that we love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Moreover, Jesus reminds us that goodness is found in self-giving love. It is in the giving of self that we become increasingly human, that we are freed of the inclination to act out of desire and fear. This Gospel notes that there can be no liberty, no freedom without a deep commitment to fraternity; that God's commandment to love others as we love our selves is in fact a necessary condition for true liberty. This is also to say that liberty is always then a negotiated and contended state. It is never an ideal removed from the dirty fray of life. Finally, this Gospel is understood to be in need of interpretation and "activation"—that is it needs to be embodied. Both functions—interpretation and embodiment—are carried out within community understood as "the body," the collective. The task of living well and wisely, of fulfilling our human potential, is too great and complex a task to be undertaken alone.

The radical individualism that typically underlies claims for academic freedom too often rings of an arrogant self-interest that stands apart from the interests and welfare of others both within and outside the university. Commitment to academic freedom understood as the freedom to engage in the scholarship of research and teaching is undoubtedly critical to the life of the academy. More broadly, individual freedom and the consequent responsibility for one's own actions and dispositions are essential to the cultivation of a moral life. But if universities are to retain the support of the societies that sustain them, academics must demonstrate commitment not only to the freedom of the individual, but to a life and a body of work that demonstrates commitment not only to living one's own story in accordance with one's own desires and inclinations, but commitment to the lives and narratives of others. To this end the cultivation of the virtues of love and humility is essential. Authentic fraternity is possible. Peace and justice are the broad purposes of communities that cherish the welfare of others. The virtues named mark a place of beginning.

# Perspectives on Mennonite College Leadership in Today's Context

*James M. Harder*

The invitation to contribute an essay for this volume in honour of the career of my friend and professional colleague, Dr. Gerald Gerbrandt of Canadian Mennonite University, provides a welcome opportunity for reflecting on the presidential leadership role that in recent years we have held in common, yet in our own unique institutional settings. The expectations and trust bestowed upon those who lead or have led the various Mennonite institutions of higher education in North America is significant. Our respective institutional histories share many situational differences. Yet we all hold in common the fact that we serve churches, alumni, current students, dedicated employees, and community members who expect much of us and of our institutions.

At my own inauguration in 2006 as the ninth president of Bluffton University in Ohio, I reflected on my awareness of that reality. Over the prior 107 years, the eight presidents who had preceded me at Bluffton had carefully stewarded and nurtured the college's educational mission. They each had rejoiced with their contemporaries in institutional achievements over the years—the examples of students whose lives had been transformed through their education, faculty and staff recruitment, program enhancements, and campus facilities development. They each had also faced innumerable challenges and limitations, some internal and some external to the institution.

## The Nature and Motivation of Our Work

As is surely the case for others in similar positions, I was keenly aware as I assumed Bluffton's presidency that I was inheriting the accumulated history of the institution. I was humbled by that realization. Institutions have deep roots and deep sources of strength—capital built up over the years. In my inaugural address,

I voiced my understanding of how the work of the president is intergenerational. We receive the fruits of the labour, the hopes and the expectations of all who came before us, and we are charged as leaders with carrying the institution's mission forward in our own times. In so doing, the leader's role and ultimate purpose is primarily institutional, not personal, in nature. And ours is only one chapter in a longer story. As Gordon T. Smith, president of Ambrose University College and Seminary in Calgary, reflects, "We are contributors in a relay race, where we carry the baton. We carry it well and run the race well when we know how to pass the baton on to those who follow."[1]

Presidential leadership in the Christian college context is a complex task that requires a broad and demanding skill set. As in any senior position in higher education, one is required to comprehend and navigate the governance process in working in concert with the institution's board of directors. One must navigate the academic terrain of student satisfaction, program development, faculty relationships, governmental regulation, and accreditation issues. Particularly in the context of an independently financed institution, fundraising for endowment growth and facilities development, along with constant attention to enrolment management strategies are paramount requirements. Toward achieving those objectives, relational strengths and communication abilities with alumni and other constituencies are vital.

So far these presidential skill sets are descriptive of what would be required at most private colleges and universities, although in relatively smaller-scale institutions they must typically be achieved with a bare minimum of support staff. But at a faith-based institution, one essential additional requirement exists for effective presidential leadership—the ability to understand and to resonate with the dreams and commitments of a particular church constituency. All together, the demands and the expectations of the college presidency in these types of settings are multidimensional in the extreme.

As others have observed, there is seldom opportunity for extensive preparation before assuming the role of college president. In the words of Gordon Smith, "those who have moved from the work of the classroom to the work of administration know that the complexities of academic leadership—the social, emotional, political, and economic challenges—will stress us like few other demands we will face in our lives."

So why do it, he asks? So "they can foster institutions that effectively fulfill a mission that matters. They work so that the collective wisdom, influence, talent, and call of the people who make up the institution are engaged in a common cause, with shared values and commitments. It is this mission that consumes the hearts and souls and minds of academic leaders."[2]

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1 Gordon T. Smith in the foreword to *Thriving in Leadership: Strategies for Making a Difference in Christian Higher Education*, ed. Karen A. Longman (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2013), 18.

2 Ibid., 17.

Not infrequently, I am asked to reflect on what sustains one's energy in a demanding presidential leadership role. From my own experience—and I know I can speak for my colleagues at the other Mennonite colleges and universities across North America—leadership energy is ultimately drawn from the commitment of our institutions' constituencies who care passionately about our particular educational mission. While there are always institutional challenges, shortcomings, and disappointments to contend with, that support, which emanates from recognition of the life-transforming experiences of our students, is what ultimately sustains continued institutional effort.

As I soon learned when I became a new president, going out and meeting with alumni, parents, and other friends of the college is nearly always an invigorating experience—indeed it is one of the most fulfilling parts of the job. It more than offsets the occasional "lightning rod" realities of the office. Alumni and parents frequently share with me the personal stories, testimonials, and awareness of the influence that educational opportunities and campus mentors had on their lives or on the lives of their children. Of course, most often, presidents can take only a tiny fraction of personal credit for those outcomes—and no credit at all for occurrences many years in the past. Yet it is our privilege as current holders of the office to hear such stories and to pass them on to faculty and staff members who, day in and day out, fulfill the educational mission of the school.

## The Mennonite Contribution in Higher Education

I am fond of saying that just striving to be an excellent academic institution is not a sufficient reason to keep doing what we do. While that is unambiguously among our goals, we must admit that there are many other fine academic institutions out there with seats available. From my perspective, it is the deliberate intersection of faith and learning on our church-related college campuses that makes our enterprise worth doing and which justifies the commitments of so many who support an institution. This intersection adds an important dimension to education that is largely absent—and is often impossible—in more secular educational environments.

In his recent book commissioned by the Mennonite Education Agency, Goshen College history professor John D. Roth notes that convictions about how education is best achieved "inevitably rest on assumptions regarding things like truth, justice, and the nature of our commitments to each other." In this regard, he concludes that "conversations about education are ultimately *religious* in nature. Our convictions about what should be passed along to the next generation—to what ends and by what pedagogical means—reveal our most basic assumptions about the world, our beliefs regarding human nature, our vision of the good society, and our understandings about how best to achieve that vision."[3]

3 John D. Roth, *Teaching That Transforms: Why Anabaptist-Mennonite Education Matters* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2011), 16–17.

Albert J. Meyer, who for many years headed the Mennonite Board of Education, makes much the same point. "Ultimately," he writes, "a curriculum needs to arise out of a people's vision of the good society. Especially today, a curriculum should be based on a vision of the world as it should be, not just the world as it is."[4]

This normative understanding of what constitutes a complete education is what originates at the intersection of faith and learning. Rodney J. Sawatsky, former president of Conrad Grebel University College and later of Messiah College, distilled six characteristics of distinctively *Mennonite* higher education which are premised on a particular reading of Jesus: (1) understanding the primary task to be nurturing citizens of God's kingdom rather than citizens of a nation, (2) teaching Christian discipleship—following the ethic of Jesus into activities such as service and peacemaking, (3) seeing the church as an international community, including all tongues and all races, and with compassion for all people, (4) engaging in direct biblical study more so than teaching creedal statements and viewing the Bible as the primary source of Mennonite theological reflection, (5) fostering the importance of music in community worship and celebration, and (6) practicing communitarianism—which elevates the importance of shared experience above individualism, and which, in an educational setting, means that the faculty, staff and students are concerned for each other's well-being not only academically, but also personally and socially.[5]

On our Mennonite college campuses this set of core beliefs and perspectives translates into a Christian educational environment with distinctive features. Ours is rooted in an attitude of personal humility and respect for others—even for those with whom we share little in common. I believe that our Mennonite colleges and universities quite deliberately expand learning horizons in ways that are not always priorities in other educational settings.

Throughout the world, it seems like the human instinct is to want to live within our natural comfort zone—to surround ourselves with people much like ourselves, and to limit our discovery in ways that can help us avoid needing to face uncomfortable facts or uncomfortable truths. In our context of a church-related education, we work to counter those tendencies in a number of ways.

First, we continue our long-standing commitment to maintaining a broad-based liberal arts education—one grounded in the study of Scripture, social and natural sciences, humanities, history, and the arts—and one that is truly global in scope. A narrower education, particularly at the undergraduate level, simply won't prepare our students to deal with the complexities of the world they will face.

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4 Albert J. Meyer, *Realizing Our Intentions: A Guide for Churches and Colleges with Distinctive Missions* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2009), 90.

5 Rodney J. Sawatsky, "What Can the Mennonite Tradition Contribute to Christian Higher Education?" in *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-First Century,* eds. Richard B. Hughes and William T. Adrian (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 195–198.

And it won't break down false stereotypes or attitudes of cultural superiority and exceptionalism.

Second, we teach empathy—awareness and understanding of the situation and interests of others. This is sorely needed in the increasingly self-focused, polarized world and society of today. It doesn't require uniformity of belief or agreement, but rather the awareness of others as human beings and a respectful understanding of their own circumstances and perspectives. Teaching greater empathy for others in a college setting goes to the heart of the human challenge—overcoming boundaries of prejudice, of race, and of ethnicity, as difficult as that has seemed to be throughout the centuries of human history. Much of our difficulty in doing this is rooted in fear, and often fear is rooted in ignorance or lack of information. Certainly education has a role to play in providing information and in reducing unfounded fear.

When I was still teaching in Bluffton's MBA program, I made connections to U.S. immigration policy in a course on the global economy. In one video clip I used, an Anglo construction worker in San Diego looked into the camera and described his fears about increasing numbers of immigrant workers from Mexico. He quite evidently feared that his country was under assault, and that its cultural make-up would change in harmful ways. Or, in his exact words, "One day we will wake up and find out that we are all being forced to eat tacos." And he said this with great sincerity—he clearly had a vision of society that said, "It's either us or it's them. There can be no middle ground of shared coexistence."

There are many ways to build empathy and overcome such fears, but the best require face-to-face contact with people not entirely like us. We do that on our campuses by enrolling students from various backgrounds, faith traditions, worship communities, economic status, racial/ethnic characteristics, and countries of origin.

Mennonite colleges and universities also teach empathy for others by facilitating off campus cross-cultural educational, learning, and service experiences for our students. For example, at Bluffton, a high percentage of our traditional age students will graduate having had at least one such significant cross-cultural experience led by faculty to places such as Colombia, Guatemala, Bolivia, Botswana, Israel/Palestine, and closer to home in diverse places such as the Gulf Coast, Mexican border region, Appalachian Kentucky, Chicago, and New York City. There's nothing like a good first person experience in an unfamiliar setting to break down barriers and stereotypes. Often graduates reflect that their cross-cultural learning was one of the most significant elements of their college experience.

I have often reflected that as a group, the Mennonite higher education institutions have real strengths and convictions about the importance of global education—perhaps it's one of our "comparative advantages," in the language of my own discipline of economics. It certainly is a particularly relevant aspect of education in this time of increasing globalization. Given the relatively recent migration experience and history of many Mennonite groups, it is not surprising that a special

passion for global education is in our institutional DNA. Often it is inspired and nurtured through many of our faculty and staff's personal experiences in assignments with global church-related organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), Mennonite World Conference (MWC), or other mission activities.

Third, we must be willing to recognize that following the example set by the life of Christ will at times pull us out of our comfort zone. We will learn things and face implications about topics related to justice and the misuse of power that we might sometimes prefer to avoid. Yet if we take our faith seriously, we can't avoid the fact that Jesus called his followers to create an upside-down kingdom in this world—a kingdom where the last will be first, where the weak and marginalized are helped to stand tall, and where economic justice is a bottom-line value.

On Mennonite college campuses, students are exposed to an approach to teaching that questions extremes of religious or nationalistic expression that are counter to God's equal love for every human being. They are exposed to evidence of human need close to home and around the world, and encounter examples of numerous individuals who have chosen service assignments or career paths that help address such needs in direct or indirect ways. They receive an education designed, as Bluffton's mission statement puts it, "to prepare students of all backgrounds for life as well as vocation, for responsible citizenship, for service to all peoples, and ultimately for the purposes of God's universal kingdom."

## Leading into the Future

It is risky to predict the future of any institution. But it seems a fair bet, based on past history, to assume that significant change will be a part of it. It is not my intent here to reflect on the many tectonic shifts facing the higher education industry in general—shifts related to the impact of digital technologies on teaching and learning models, and on challenges associated with the ever-increasing demands, expectations, and costs of higher education. Rather, my purpose here is to examine briefly two aspects of the contextual environment, which in coming years will impact leadership's efforts to maintain a distinctively Anabaptist/Mennonite voice and perspective within the world of higher education.

First is the goal of continuing to meet the changing educational needs of students who come from an Anabaptist/Mennonite background. It is important to understand how, over time, those educational needs have shifted and will likely continue to shift. A professional colleague, philosopher Melvin Goering, has written a stimulating paper describing the evolving institutional purposes of one of our Mennonite colleges with a long and distinctive history (Bethel College), in relation to its Mennonite constituency.[6]

During the first half century of the college's existence, from its founding up

6 Melvin Goering, "Focusing on Our Distinctive," unpublished paper presented at the Mennonite Education Leaders Gathering, Pittsburgh, PA, January 29, 2009.

until the 1930s, Goering suggests that its primary mission was to provide education and training of Mennonite youth from the surrounding Mennonite immigrant communities. This arrangement, he noted, allowed students to gain skills in a Mennonite social context—including use of both the German and English languages—and then return to the local immigrant Mennonite communities where they would help provide the next generation of leadership and sustain the values of the immigrant culture.

But during the second fifty years of the college's history, from the 1930s through approximately the early 1980s, Goering posits that the primary Mennonite mission of the college shifted—mirroring the acculturation of its founding constituencies. Its student body and faculty roster were both still overwhelmingly Mennonite in composition. But rather than preparing Mennonite students for an assumed return to community and farm life, it "provided education and training of Mennonite youth from rural small town communities to give them the skills and confidence to be launched into successful roles in the broader world."[7] It became an effective and safe environment for moving once predominantly rural and agrarian Mennonites into other professions, often in more cosmopolitan settings far distant from home communities.

Goering argues that the school was very effective at this role, providing an empowering education infused with Mennonite values and one that met society's increasing expectations of academic excellence. But in successfully filling this need for its supportive Mennonite communities, Goering suggests that the college might also have accelerated conditions that led to subsequent challenges in maintaining future levels of enrolment among its traditional Mennonite student base.

From the mid-1980s to the present, Goering suggests that for some portions of its Mennonite constituency, the primary mission of the college "is increasingly unclear as Mennonite youth become more and more acculturated and mobile and no longer need a safe Mennonite cultural launching pad for success in the world."[8] While it is certainly Goering's contention that there remain strong arguments for choosing an education that is strongly informed by Anabaptist/Mennonite values, he points toward the difficulty of arguing for that distinctive in a college environment where Mennonite families increasingly consider a much larger set of colleges to be acceptable places to acquire career skills that will help ensure future economic security.

A second contextual challenge for Anabaptist/Mennonite higher education in the future relates to the changing position of Christian higher education itself within the broader academic culture of today's increasingly secularized "post-Christian" era. The trend is one that is difficult to dismiss or ignore. For most of the first two centuries following the founding of Harvard College, which was established

7 Ibid., 3.

8 Ibid., 6.

by Puritan leaders in 1636 to provide the Massachusetts Bay Colony with learned ministers, virtually all colleges and universities in America were institutions that had been founded for purposes of religious education. And as late as the 1890s, even the great majority of public state universities required chapel attendance of their students and many required Sunday church attendance.[9] But by the end of the twentieth century, as Albert Meyer reports, "fewer than one-fourth of the higher education institutions in America had a church relationship of any kind, and fewer than one-eighth of the college and university students in America were attending church-affiliated institutions."[10] And even within that reduced subset, some church-affiliated institutions remain more serious than others about the centrality of their historical religious mission within the expression of their current institutional objectives. It can often seem that within the broader higher educational environment, the Christian campus appeal is on the wane.

So what might be done to strengthen the future of our Mennonite/Anabaptist institutions of higher learning in the face of these dual contextual challenges? How can we reverse the declining numbers of students from within the Mennonite denomination who are choosing to attend one of their own colleges? And how can we work to do our part to strengthen the role and impact of Christian higher education at large?

Perhaps the antidote to both challenges is the same. I'm struck by a perspective voiced by John R. W. Stott, noted Anglican cleric and long-time rector of All Souls Church in London, in a preface to a recent collection of essays on Christian higher education and a vigorous life of the mind. "One of the major reasons why people reject the gospel in the West today," he suggests, "is not because they perceive it to be false, but because they perceive it to be trivial. They think it is inadequate for the complexities and challenges in the world today."[11]

Those of us who are products of Anabaptist/Mennonite higher education, who have been shaped by it and have taken up the leadership tasks of extending similar opportunities to future generations of students, quite naturally tend to see such things very differently. The gospel, lived out, is both powerful and demonstrably world changing. We observe the transformational learning that occurs on our campuses in innumerable settings day in and day out. We see the profound differences that an ethic of "love of God and love of neighbour" make in the vocational, church, and community contributions of our graduates over a lifetime. I'm sure that I am not alone among my presidential colleagues in finding the reflections and personal stories recounted at the annual alumni award recognition dinner to be among the most inspirational moments of each academic year.

9 Thomas E. Corts, "The University, the Church, and the Culture" in *Thinking Christianly: Christian Higher Education and a Vigorous Life of the Mind,* ed. Paul R. Corts (Birmingham, AL: Samford University Press, 2011), 19.

10 Meyer, *Realizing Our Intentions,* 18.

11 See Stott's preface in Corts, *Thinking Christianly,* xvi.

So how can we more effectively share those sorts of understandings? How can we inspire more students to spend a crucial portion of their educational journey on our campuses? My friend and former stewardship theologian for Mennonite Mutual Aid (now Everence), Lynn Miller, is fond of explaining the Anabaptist belief system to others in starkly simple, yet very compelling terms: "Jesus meant what he said and we believe he's talking to us today." In other words, we are not striving to master the contents of a 2,000 year old book as if it were an academic exercise. As Anabaptists we have committed to focus on and follow the radical examples of a living Lord, with all the cutting edge relevance and excitement that entails in the twenty-first century.

Or as Miller further expounds, "Most people are bothered by how much of the Bible they don't understand. I'm bothered by things I *do* understand." This is the sort of life-changing learning that motivates Christian commitment and action—learning that makes students want to change the world for the better. It is the sort of life-changing learning that goes to the heart of our societal complexities today because it addresses the most fundamental issues of the human condition.

Anthony Kronman, a law professor at Yale University, argues in a published interview that professors at most of America's public and private universities find "the question of life's meaning … too large, too sprawling, too personal to be a subject that any specialized scholar feels comfortable tackling" and laments the "directionlessness that prevails at most colleges and universities."[12] By contrast, faculty at Christian colleges and universities, with their ability to more freely address such ultimate questions in life that are essentially religious in nature, are able to fully function within this domain. We cannot give up on making the case to Mennonite students and others that the best and most complete education occurs in settings like our campuses that allow for the exploration of *all* significant questions, including those that are deeply personal and religious in nature.

A former president of Trinity Western University, Jonathan Raymond, observes that today's secular universities "have abandoned their first commitment. They no longer encourage faculty to come along-side students and help develop the whole person. They collectively gave up their moral imperative and spiritual mission."[13] Faculty members of such institutions are constrained in sharing their deepest insights about some of life's truly big questions or in openly exploring with their students normative topics such as what "ought to be" in the world. As humanities scholar Andrew Delbanco explains in a recent book evaluating the qualities of today's college education, contemporary "professors" still carry the same historic label as their predecessors whose profession was made before the congregation in overtly religious settings. "Surely this meaning is one to which we should still wish

12 Cited in Paul R. Corts, "Transforming Lives," in Corts, *Thinking Christianly,* 44.

13 Jonathan S. Raymond in the foreword to *Called to Transform: Essays on Spiritual Formation in Canada's Christian University,* ed. Gordon Chutter (Langley, BC: Trinity Western University, 2011), xiii.

to lay claim, since the true teacher must always be a professor in the root sense of the word," he suggests.[14]

Even where schools are free to include such things in their curriculum, barriers to teaching and learning sometimes remain. Open and honest exploration of the gospel's underlying concerns for the welfare of other people, and really trying to live out such principles on a daily basis, brings us face-to-face with a host of messy, thorny, and knotty issues that some might prefer to avoid. On a church college campus, as elsewhere, it is certainly a temptation to seek shelter from uncomfortable truths or issues fraught with controversy. But that would be misguided. As one of my Mennonite college presidential colleagues has observed, we should never feel the need to apologize for encouraging on our campuses open and reasoned conversation about any issue that is of significant concern within the membership of our supportive congregations. That function is among the roles that our church-related institutions of higher education should be performing.

Toward that same end of ensuring relevance in today's world and preparing our graduates for the world in which they will live, we should not see as undesirable one of the current enrolment trends at our colleges and universities. Increasingly, with a drop in the percentage of our students who come from Mennonite backgrounds, our campuses are enrolling a greater diversity of students from various cultures and faith traditions. And I believe that is ultimately a good thing. It is a good thing for students from our Mennonite constituencies, and it is a good thing for students from other traditions—some of whom come because they find particular institutional values attractive, and others who might become exposed to them for the first time.

Being a Christian institution that embraces such diversity can add important elements of reality and relevance to the campus conversation as differences of world view and belief systems are more likely to be encountered and dealt with. Some might find that unsettling because it is not "safe" or exclusively supportive of a particular set of beliefs or values. Others (including some of our urban Mennonite families) will see the same thing and conclude that this is a place that reflects the types of communities in which they currently live or expect to live. I would argue that *not* having such growth-producing encounters with differences on our college campuses risks the far more likely danger that our students will leave college not having learned how to own their belief systems and how to think for themselves as they make their way in the world. We need to give our students the types of realistic understandings and experiences while on campus that help prepare them for faithful lives in the diverse settings in which they are likely to live.

The Christian campus experience that is characterized by increasing student diversity of cultural background, faith experience, community of origin, etc., requires particular awareness and clarity of institutional mission. Such schools must

14 Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 66.

remain exceptionally clear about their purpose, their values, and their mission—and do so in a vocabulary of inclusiveness.

More helpful than a description of "being a Mennonite school" is the clear statement of the values that we in fact hold dear: Christian discipleship in following the ethic of Jesus, a focus on peace and justice, love of neighbour, and a strong value placed on community life and discernment. These values are open to anyone who embraces them, and all such members of the campus community—whether Mennonite or not—can feel as if they belong on an equal footing. In the crucial matter of recruiting and hiring faculty and staff, it is also important to recognize that "being Mennonite" does not necessarily ensure an advantage in resonating with core institutional values. Some of the most mission-centred employees I have worked with have come from other faith traditions.

When mission and identity are no longer adequately defined by a short-hand denominational label, the communication task of the leaders becomes even more crucial. The institution's historic values embraced by Mennonites can still be strong, but as others are welcomed into a growing and evolving institution, new ways must be found to articulate such values in a more inclusive vocabulary free of insider terms or references. This is not just a challenge for purposes of recruiting students and faculty. It is also a challenge to ensure that the mission of the institution is strongly maintained into the future. As noted management consultant and educator Peter Drucker has concluded, "The first task of the leader is to make sure that everybody sees the mission, hears it, and lives it. If you lose sight of your mission, you begin to stumble and it shows very, very fast."[15]

Leading our Mennonite colleges and universities into the future will not be an easy task—nor, a reading of our institutional histories clearly reveals, has it *ever* been easy. Finding the right leadership at the right moments is rightly seen as the most significant task of any institution's board of directors. Richard Ekman, president of the Council of Independent Colleges, expresses concern about the supply of future leadership given all of today's challenges. "Search consultants note that, except for highly prestigious institutions, the number of candidates for most presidencies is smaller today than it once was," he writes.[16] Nor is the selection ever a trivial concern. As a college president, I have become quite aware of the many decisions, large and small, that relate to maintaining institutional mission and direction during periods of limited resources, increasing external regulation, and competing interests. Over time, even a series of relatively minor decisions can add up to a change of course that is quite significant. We cannot take our responsibility to steward the mission lightly.

In spite of the many challenges that our Mennonite college and university leaders will need to face in the future, I remain optimistic that our underlying

15 Peter Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 45.

16 Richard Ekman, "The Joys of the College Presidency," *University Business* (September 2010), 63.

educational mission will be maintained—although there's little doubt that even twenty-five years from now we will marvel at all the changes that have occurred. The energy that ultimately ensures survival of the mission is the conviction and first-hand experience of so many alumni and friends that the type of education our institutions provide matters. It matters who we learn from and who mentors our students; there is no such a thing as a "values-free" education at any institution. It matters to our students' (and indeed our own children's) development and life preparation. It matters to the world that their vocational choices and service commitments will impact. It matters to congregations who need a supply of trained and motivated leaders, informed by values that will extend the Anabaptist/Mennonite witness. And it matters to the future health and strength of the denomination through geographically broad networks of relationships that are established on our campuses.

The future of our Mennonite institutions seems bright so long as we continue to be clear on articulating our mission and following our Anabaptist commitment to living out our faith in holistic ways seven days a week. The two outcomes are inseparable. If we fail to be able to make a compelling case for the importance of our distinctive faith-informed values, we will also fail to make the compelling case for maintaining our colleges and universities in a world of so many educational options.

# Co-curricular Learning: CMU's Story of Transformative Education

*Marilyn Peters Kliewer and Adelia Neufeld Wiens*

## Introduction

The programs and services of CMU's Student Life Department provide an important function to the university's educational vision. The task of creating a healthy Christian environment that empowers students to become creative thinkers and workers does not happen only in the classroom. With a focus on collaborative and co-curricular endeavours, different parts of the university work together to create a community where students belong and matter and where they are encouraged and motivated to thrive, live with integrity, and become self-confident and resilient contributors to the larger community.

## The Vision

Patricia Cross, long-time Berkeley Professor of Higher Education, compares the experience of students beginning university to having a jigsaw puzzle that comes in a blank box.[1] There are many pieces in this box that are new and unrecognizable and it can be overwhelming to know how to put them together. Like solving a puzzle with few clues, many first year students need to fit together the new and unfamiliar environments, living arrangements, relationships, and course options. Choices lie before them in an exciting way. It is a challenging time where students have to balance the studying and socializing pieces and make many choices about where to place priorities and values.

A healthy learning environment requires that students find a supportive and

1 Cited in George D. Kuh., Jillian Kinzie, John H. Schuh, Elizabeth J. Whitt, eds., *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 109.

stimulating place to consider their personal puzzle pieces and begin to place them together. From the first day students arrive until they graduate, the underlying principle is this: when students have a sense of belonging and are involved, they will deepen their faith and develop clarity with respect to their responsibility to others.

1. *Belonging and Involvement:* In a review of literature about student success in post-secondary education, two main ideals stand out as pivotal: belonging and involvement. Adult development theorist Nancy K. Schlossberg notes that students need to feel that they matter, and she states that this sense of belonging is a necessary prerequisite for students to participate in campus activities and academic pursuits.[2] To "matter," she suggests, has many components: attention, feeling noticed by others, importance, feeling cared about, believing that another empathizes with one's successes and failures, dependence, feeling needed and appreciated, and a sense that one's efforts are valued by others.[3] A.W. Astin suggests that for learning to occur students must also become actively involved in their college or university environment. He states, "The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program."[4]

   Our observations support this emphasis. In a recent analysis of students who completed their degrees at CMU, nearly every student who graduated had been actively involved each year in co-curricular activities, athletics, or a leadership role. This insight confirms the importance of early and continued engagement. Students who are drawn into programs beyond the classroom tend to be more successful in their studies and persist to graduation.

2. *Collaborative Education:* It is our observation that collaborative education is required to create an environment that will help students to not only survive and cope as university students but to thrive and become competent and tenacious learners, thinkers, and leaders.

   A collaborative approach requires that Student Life staff get to know individual faculty members and their specific interests and then find ways to connect their expertise with particular student needs. As longtime student affairs administrator C. Arthur Sandeen notes, "On every campus, there is faculty whose talents can be tapped for the benefit of students and

2 As cited in F.A. Hamrich, N.J. Evans, and J.H. Schuh, *Foundations of Student Affairs Practice* (San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 86.

3 Ibid.

4 As cited in ibid., 84.

their out-of-class education."[5] When faculty and staff participate in student engagement beyond the classroom, including Student Life programs, there is more support for and understanding of what the Student Life Department does. Sandeen observes, "The best way to fail is for student affairs leaders to isolate themselves, thinking that they can do their jobs without involving others."[6] Bearing this in mind, the Student Life team has made concerted efforts to build programs and create new initiatives with the help and assistance of faculty and other staff. A result of this collaboration is a "seamless learning environment"[7] where in-class and out-of-class experiences are mutually supportive. As Gary Kramer writes, the task of educating university students is "the business of everyone on the campus."[8]

3. *Co-curricular Education:* An important assertion is that programs of Student Life are not "extra-" curricular but rather *co*-curricular.[9] Karen Cornies, Dean of Students at Redeemer University, defines the goals of co-curricular learning as character development, leadership development, friendship building, healthy lifestyle, creation of good citizens, usefulness in contributing to the university/church/society, retention, and the integration of theory and practice.[10] These goals resonate with CMU's educational vision. So, as planners of co-curricular education, Student Life staff are considered as collaborative educators alongside faculty and staff. With this co-curricular approach to education a high value is given to the development of character, leadership, friendship, and effective involvement in a variety of contexts while also promoting responsibility and accountability in the context of a supportive and enriching environment. Collaborative and co-curricular learning creates an environment where all students have the opportunity for a rigorous, fulfilling, and enriching academic experience.

An emphasis on collaboration and co-curricular learning requires the thoughtful

5 C. Arthur Sandeen, "Developing Effective Campus and Community Relationships," in *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration,* 2nd ed., eds. M.J. Barr, M.K. Desler and Associates (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 383.

6 Barr, *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration,* 377.

7 We are indebted to F.A. Hamrick et al., *Foundations of Student Affairs Practice* 123, for this term.

8 Gary Kramer and Associates, *Fostering Student Success in the Campus Community* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2007), xxiii.

9 Extra-curricular activities may be seen as "peripheral" and even "unnecessary." Hence, the emphasis on co-curricular, with some (i.e., Robert D. Brown as cited in Hamrick, 117) arguing that the term should be "curricular with no prefix added."

10 Karen Cornies, "Vision for Co-curricular Learning: Never Stop Learning" (Presentation to Redeemer University, Spring 2009), 2.

and intentional creation of spaces where staff and students can meet and mingle.[11] Architecture matters! CMU's Student Centre as well as the new Library and Learning Commons were designed to meet the academic and social needs of students. Passersby see learning occurring outside the classroom as they observe groups of students studying or working at a project. Professors are invited to answer a question or join in a conversation. Opportunities of a co-curricular culture are seen at the Folio Café as well as in the student-run Blaurock Café, where learning occurs behind the coffee counters as well as around the tables. Groups of students gather to study or quiz each other. Faculty members arrange to meet with colleagues or students over a latte. The spaces are used for public forums around issues of the day. This blend of formal and informal opportunities serves to create a learning space and community.

Space considerations are not only important for students. To help to foster the development of friendships and mutual respect among both academic and non-academic colleagues, office locations and spaces are carefully considered with potential collaboration in mind. By having offices for faculty, academic administrators, and Student Life staff in close proximity, there are frequent opportunities for informal interactions that bring about more formal collaborative efforts. Partnerships are often formed among individuals who share space or have a relationship with one another.

The ideals that undergird our programs need to be regularly reviewed and examined. Seeking congruency between the Student Life programs and the educational objectives of the university, the Student Life staff takes time each year to remind itself of the core values and principles of the CMU Mission Statement as well as its own Mission Statement.[12] The department then scrutinizes this second statement and "tweaks" it, considering it an ongoing draft.[13] This "draft" document

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11 A. Kezar, D.J. Hirsch, and C. Burack, eds., *Understanding the Role of Academic and Student Affairs: Collaboration in Creating a Successful Learning Environment* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 58.

12 The CMU Student Life Team currently consists of eight members: Dean of Student Life, Residence Director, Senior Residence Assistant, Coordinator of Commuter/Accessibility/International Programs, Athletics Director, Coordinator of Student Advising, Financial and Student Services Advisor, and Spiritual Life Facilitator.

13 This is the August 2012 revision of the Student Life Mission Statement:
The Student Life Department works in partnership with faculty, staff and students, to foster a Christian environment that promotes student learning; to encourage spiritual, social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth; and to prepare students for service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.
The Student Life Department contributes by:

Encouraging and challenging students to develop character, values, and leadership skills that are in keeping with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Striving to build a community where every person is respected and supported, while also being held accountable for the choices that are made.

Developing and implementing programs and activities that complement the academic curriculum and meet the needs of students.

is used in orientation of new faculty and staff from other departments as well as a training tool for new Student Life staff and as a measure with which new initiatives and responses to issues are assessed.

The work of co-curricular and collaborative education is idealistic. Together with students and university staff the Student Life Department works to build an institutional culture of encouragement, community, and accountability. While these ideas are not unique to CMU or to university education, they embody our concern for developing women and men of Christian character in a caring community who are inspired and equipped "to lead lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society."[14]

## Initiatives and Examples

There are many ways in which the Student Life Department contributes to a collaborative co-curricular learning environment where students belong, are involved, and succeed. The following are descriptions of nine areas beyond the classroom where these ideals are tested and implemented.

1. *Spiritual Life:* The goal of spiritual life programming is to nurture students in faith and discipleship with the aim of inspiring and equipping them to love and follow Jesus Christ. Chapels, fellowship groups, prayer workshops, Pastor-In-Residence events, and pastoral care provide opportunities for spiritual growth.

   Chapels are at the centre of the spiritual life program. Students, staff, and faculty gather several times each week to worship together. Community members participate in the planning and delivery of chapels. The Spiritual Life Facilitator and the Community Gatherings Committee, consisting of student and faculty representatives, provide leadership. The following statement guides their decision-making:

   > *Chapels create space for the CMU community to worship God, to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, expressing our identity as a university community centred in devotion to God.*

   Just as the community shares in the work of chapel planning and implementation, the community also carries the responsibility of providing pastoral care. Students learn that they can rely on their peers, professors, Student Life staff, and others for support. In addition, pastors from the supporting constituency are invited to live on campus for a week at a time in order to minister to the community as Pastors-In-Residence. Several local Spiritual Directors regularly provide prayer workshops and other assistance including Spiritual Direction. The Pastors-In-Residence and Spiritual Directors add significant value to the Spiritual Life programming at CMU.

14 This phrase is from the CMU mission statement.

Student fellowship group leaders are also a key part of the spiritual programming at CMU. Meeting weekly, fellowship groups provide a safe and welcoming setting for students to explore matters of faith and share the joys and challenges of their daily lives. Students regularly express gratitude for the many ways in which the CMU community encourages them to live as authentic disciples of Christ.

2. *Academic Advising:* Sharon Daloz Parks suggests that "young adulthood is rightfully a time of asking big questions and discovering worthy dreams."[15] Academic advising provides an important opportunity for young adults to think through many questions as they make choices about courses, majors, degrees, careers, and so on. These questions are big:

   "Who am I in this world?"

   "What am I good at?"

   "What am I passionate about?"

   "What do I value?"

   "How can I serve?"

   "What can I contribute?"

   In the collaborative and seamless learning environments of classroom and cafeteria, lounge and library, athletics and academics, students grapple with these big questions and acquire skills that will lead to lifelong learning. Richard Keeling, Senior Fellow at the National Centre for Science and Civic Engagement, suggests that "student affairs, in this conceptualization, is integral to the learning process because of the opportunities it provides students to learn through action, contemplation, reflection and emotional engagement as well as information acquisition."[16] The hope is that throughout their university education students are being inspired and equipped to dream worthy dreams.

   Advisors play a significant role in creating an environment of mentorship and collaboration. The twenty-first-century realities of constant change and growing diversity require careful interpretation and advising.[17]

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15 Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 5. She writes further, " … young adulthood is the birthplace of adult vision, and within a positive mentoring environment it can galvanize the power of ongoing cultural renewal," 8.

16 Richard P. Keeling, ed., *Learning Reconsidered* (Washington, DC: National Association of Student Personnel Administration, 2004), 11.

17 Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. How We Can Learn to Fulfill Our Potential* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006), 219, suggests that success, in everything from education to business to relationships, comes from having a "growth mindset." The approach she

At CMU each student has a faculty advisor who provides academic perspective and acts as a mentor. Students are also encouraged to consult with the Coordinator of Student Advising regarding program choices and academic options. This Coordinator's centralized office is located strategically between the Dean of Student Life and the CMU Registrar as a way of recognizing that the Coordinator of Student Advising is an active member of the Student Life team but much of the Coordinator's work also relates to the academic aspects of the university.

Academic advising is greatly enhanced by collaboration. When a student has difficulties with academic rigour it often means that the student is also struggling elsewhere—in relationships or finances or both. With a collaborative approach to advising it is possible for students to be referred to a counsellor[18] or to the financial services advisor or to the employment office. It may be that the student should be referred to other resources, such as the student-run Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)[19] program or to an academic tutor.[20] All of these free services allow students to feel supported and encouraged by the institution.

3. *Career Advising:* In addition to academic advising it is important to provide advising around career options, choices, and pathways. Career advising at CMU is collaborative and occurs in the classroom, the academic advisor's office, through student employment, and in the many other leadership roles and involvements available on campus. Professors, Student Life staff, library personnel, and on-campus job supervisors are all facilitators in career advising.

   Career advising is linked with program choices. Through classes and conversations with professors and staff the value of a liberal arts education is articulated and experienced in such a way that career options are broadened rather than limited. The skills of critical thinking, writing and

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suggests makes sense to us and articulates the angles with which we approach academic, career, and life advising at CMU.

18 CMU has several trained volunteers who provide counselling services to CMU students.

19 The Peer Assisted Learning program was initiated by several pre-education students in winter 2011. They observed some students struggling with essay writing skills and surmised that these students needed to develop study, reading, and writing strategies. These students offered to organize a "collective," where experienced students could help their peers while also gaining experience in tutoring. This initiative is supervised by the Coordinator of Student Advising, and there are regular meetings throughout the year where faculty representatives are invited to meet the student helpers. PAL is an example of collaboration as well as co-curricular education; the PAL volunteers are constantly learning while helping others, and serve as collaborators with faculty.

20 CMU has several volunteer tutors who are available to coach students in study skills, essay writing, and strategizing for success. These volunteers are supervised and coordinated by the Coordinator of Student Advising.

research skills, time management and collaboration are highlighted. The practicum, a requirement in all Bachelor of Arts, Business, and Music Therapy programs, becomes a vital aspect of career planning.

The On-Campus Student Employment Program provides employment to over 100 students each year and gives students valuable work experience as well as financial income to support their education at CMU. Studies have shown that students who work on campus are generally more engaged in the community. Further, we observe that when we are able to offer students work experience and references for their resumé, their career planning is enhanced.

Career fairs, pre-professional information sessions, alumni presentations, and area-specific clubs and committees also provide opportunities for career discernment. Faculty and staff work with students to provide opportunities for career considerations and relevant skill development.

4. *Accessibility Services:* Students who disclose that they have a disability or other difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety) in their personal and academic lives may qualify for academic accommodations. These services and accommodations are individualized for a wide variety of diagnoses including learning disability, mobility impairment, hearing impairment, medical condition, or mental health condition. The intent is that all students have a chance to be successful at university. As the National Educational Association of Disabled Students notes, "accommodations are intended to level the playing field so that students with disabilities have the chance to develop the same skills and abilities expected of all students."[21]

   A collaborative approach is taken when a student requiring accessibility services seeks to attend CMU. First, the student meets with the Coordinator of Accessibility Services. Then introductions are made and relationships established across departments. After academic advising is received and courses are chosen, accommodations or accessibility concerns are addressed and expedited through the close relationship with the Registrar's office. The student's faculty advisor and the Coordinator of Student Advising become allies and advocates for the student.

   The accessibility services at CMU continue to grow and evolve. One significant example is CMU's Scent-Free Policy,[22] which was established

21 National Educational Association of Disabled Students, "Enhancing Accessibility in Post-Secondary Education Institutions: A Guide for Disability Service Providers," http://www.neads.ca/en/norc/eag/, accessed June 23, 2015.

22 The CMU Scent-Free Policy was approved by the Administration Team in May 2004. It reads, "In recognition of individuals who struggle with asthma, allergies and environmental/chemical sensitivities, please refrain from wearing fragrances and scented products on campus. CMU is

after several years of working with students who had particularly serious sensitivities to scents and odours. The policy grew out of a collaborative effort where faculty, students, and staff considered carefully how our university expresses its values.[23] This statement has become a model for other educational institutions.

By providing services for those who need and request them, students and faculty are given a chance to expand and challenge any preconceived ideas they may have had about learning, and they often become more creative and compassionate. Every student makes unique contributions in the classroom even though there is not always a quick or easy understanding of the "other."

5. *Residential Programming:* The residence life program at CMU plays an important part in a student's sense of belonging because it provides a "built-in community" that enhances the student's academic experience. As an aspect of the unique community promoted at CMU, residence is intended to be a place where students experience interdependence and learn how to live with people from significantly different backgrounds and beliefs. Heather Lane Vetere (Vice-Provost Students at Ryerson University) notes, "The very nature of residence living, with many students from diverse backgrounds expressing different ideas, lifestyles, and expectations living together, provides a ready-made laboratory for the learning of important life skills that have the potential to significantly impact students' future interpersonal relationship and career successes."[24]

   Many regular and special events enhance the CMU residence experience. From communal snack every evening to all-residence parties such as "midnight snack" or "open house," students are able to connect, make new friends, and deepen their current friendships. Students also have the opportunity to attend churches, often ones that are new to them, and be involved in volunteer and community opportunities both on and off campus.

   Learning does not stop when students leave the classroom and return to their dorm room or apartment. Indeed, the student living environment is

striving to be a scent-free environment."

23 Numerous other initiatives have arisen from similar ferment around "values" and global ethical considerations. Beyond the concerns of accessibility services, these discussions have included such topics as fair-trade coffee (all coffee served at CMU is now fair trade), the availability of products from Coca Cola, and the development of an on-campus farm that seeks to develop a "just food" system.

24 Heather Lane Vetere, "Housing and Residence Life," in Donna Hardy Cox and C. Carney Strange, eds., *Achieving Student Success: Effective Student Services in Canadian Higher Education* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 84.

an active continuation of the learning process.[25] On-campus living provides a "living/learning" environment where students bring information and discussions from their classes to the dinner table, the apartment, and the soccer field. While all university students develop skills such as time and resource management, those who live in an on-campus residential setting find the learning to be considerably more collaborative. They help one another to figure out what works and what does not when it comes to study skills, test preparation, and essay writing. In the handful of years that students live in residence, they grow and mature in a caring environment where they are both challenged and supported.

After their first year of university, students have the opportunity to apply to be Residence Assistants. These RAs each live on and are responsible for one floor in the residential complex. The RAs lead their floor in meetings, events, and spiritual care. In this way, the RA can grow in his or her leadership skills and new students have an approachable resource to mentor them throughout their journey at CMU.

Students who live on campus benefit most from the experience when they consciously choose to engage and be involved. This attitude of engagement provides a posture with which students approach their university career and is effective in building lifelong learners.

6. *Commuter Programming:* Approximately 60% of CMU students do not live on campus so many students come to school via bicycle, foot, bus, or car. Students choose to be commuters for a variety of reasons, including financial realities, family commitments (particularly for those returning to education as mature students), or volunteer, church, or work commitments.

   In a study of the needs of university commuter students John Newbold, Sanjay Mehta, and Patricia Forbus discovered that the "commuting student tackles challenges that the non-commuting student typically doesn't face, especially feelings of isolation, multiple life roles and different support systems." Further, they observed that commuter students often do not have the same sense of belonging at university as residential students may have.[26]

   For these reasons, CMU's Student Life staff intentionally work to provide commuters with opportunities to become involved and connected with other students, staff, and faculty. The commuter population is diverse, but the Commuter Assistants (CAs) work under the leadership of the

25 D.S. Guthrie, *Student Affairs Reconsidered: A Christian View of the Profession and Its Contexts* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), 113.

26 John J. Newbold, Sanjay S. Mehta, and Patricia Forbus, "Student-Administrator Relationships and Commuters," *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal* 12 no. 2 (May 2011).

Coordinator of Commuter Programs to build a community of involved and engaged students. CAs are carefully selected from upper-level students who understand how challenging it can be to connect as a commuter and who are interested in serving and building relationships with their fellow students. CAs smooth the way during the orientation process by providing pertinent information, planning activities and events that open up opportunities to meet other students, and by being a friendly presence as first-time CMU students navigate campus life. As the year progresses the roles of CAs evolve to meet the changing needs of the students. Depending on the day and circumstances, the CA may be a chaplain, counsellor, tutor or social activities coordinator. CAs also act as advocates for commuter concerns.

Commuters at CMU have identified two primary needs: space (for studying, lounging, and eating) and access (such as technological access to wireless service and access to staff and faculty for students who seldom attend day-time classes).[27] With an emphasis on both casual and purposeful interaction with commuter students, the strategic development of lounge and locker spaces as well as the layout for the new Library and Learning Commons have brought the commuter program into proximity with faculty and staff as well as residential students. Furthermore, the inclusion of both the Residence Director and the Director of Commuter Programming on the Student Life team and Community Council allows for collaborative program development so that both commuters and residential students are provided opportunities to interact and work together.

7. *Community Council:* The Community Council is a vital and unique aspect of CMU. This council consists of student representatives of the residential and commuter communities and representatives from faculty, Student Life, facilities staff, and Student Council.

   With an emphasis on collaboration and co-curricular education the Community Council provides an "umbrella" organization for faculty, staff, and students to work together to ensure a healthy and educational Christian community. They meet weekly to discuss issues and concerns that affect the CMU community. Their goal is to encourage positive living and community development. This council works at applying the principles learned in the classroom to practical situations in the life of the community. When deemed necessary, the council brings recommendations to the larger CMU community. It operates with a culture of confidentiality and respect.

   Community Council has helped to shape what CMU has become. We

27 Cordella Friesen, who was Coordinator of Commuter Programming from 2006–09, noted these priories in an unpublished document called "Commuter Life Programming," October 2007.

expect that shaping to continue well into the future.

8. *Athletics:* Varsity athletics provide students with the opportunity to learn from adversity and strive for success. These experiences are at the centre of the athletes' learning experience. Under the leadership of their coaches and fellow students, team members practice and prepare to reach their short- and long-term goals. Varsity athletes learn important skills in discipline, sacrifice, accountability, and time management. These skills flow into their classroom habits, relationships, and future careers. In both failure and success athletes develop character, learn the value of community encouragement and support, and develop the ability to lead and thrive in adverse situations.

   The Athletics Director is part of the Student Life team and collaborates with faculty and staff in building connections between athletics and scholastics. The link between the classroom and the court is valuable because both are places where discipline and excellence, commitment and teamwork, service and self-care are valued. CMU aims to be a centre for serious reflection on the nature of athletics in an Anabaptist Christian setting.

   The annual CMU Athletics Banquet, held at the close of the athletics season, is an opportunity for athletes to be honoured for their achievements on the court (or pitch) and in the classroom. The Manitoba Colleges Athletics Conference (MCAC) recognizes student athletes who achieve a grade-point average of 3.0 (80%) or higher with the Scholar-Athlete recognition. For the 2014–15 year, forty-five of the seventy-seven CMU varsity athletes received this Scholar Athlete designation, including twelve athletes who achieved a grade point average of 4.0 or greater.

9. *Student Leadership Development:* Students have the opportunity to participate in formal roles of leadership as well as in governance, policies, and decisions.[28] The Student Life Department encourages student leaders to be active participants in making CMU a high-quality learning environment. One of the ways this action is facilitated is in Student Leadership training events. Student Leaders are trained to be effective role models and mentors in formal Student Leadership Training which occurs at the beginning of each semester. This semi-annual event includes Student Council members, Residence Assistants (RAs), Commuter Assistants (CAs), and Blaurock Café staff along with faculty participation. Faculty members lead workshops, host the group at their home, and help to strategize and create linkages between their classes and student programming. These Student Leadership Training, events provide significant teaching opportunities

28 We recognize that students provide a unique and informed perspective on the policies that are created and adopted by the university. Each year, the CMU student body elects a student representative to sit on the CMU Board and Senate. Students are also represented on tenure committees and long-term planning groups such as the CMU Connect Campaign (a library/bridge campaign that was launched in fall 2012).

to promote the kind of leadership that will have a positive influence on the student body throughout the year.

Leadership training continues for the Student Council, CAs, and RAs, with weekly team meetings as well as one-on-one biweekly meetings with their supervisor. Many skills are developed in this co-curricular program of student leadership: conflict resolution and reconciliation, peer leadership, event planning/execution/evaluation, and participation in policy development and enactment. Many student leadership positions also have the additional resource of a faculty advisor who collaborates with the student and provides field-specific mentorship.

Student leadership development has resulted in projects and programs that provide for seamless learning within a co-curricular program. Over the past few years, the CMU Student Council has created several initiatives that are examples of collaborative and co-curricular learning. Here are three examples:

*a.* *The Pearson Challenge:* In 1969, Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson made a promise to the international community that Canada would strive to contribute 0.7% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in foreign aid to the Global South. In the context of a political studies course about ten years ago, a CMU student (who eventually became CMU Student Council President) learned that Canada is barely halfway to its original commitment, while millions still live in crippling poverty worldwide. From that class, conversations evolved and the student began an initiative to challenge all CMU students to annually donate 0.7% of their tuition amount toward an educational program in Uganda funded by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).[29]

*b.* *Tuition Freedom Day:* Instituted in 2007, Tuition Freedom Day began as an initiative by the Development Department and provided an opportunity for students to thank donors. The CMU Student Council quickly took over the planning and now Tuition Freedom Day is a student-planned, student-driven event that involves most students. Each year, near the end of November, students invite representatives from CMU's donor base, supporting church conferences, and the Manitoba Government to come to CMU for a celebration. At this event, the visitors witness the students' appreciation and join in celebrating the fact that the students'

29 After two years of CMU's involvement with this project through the Pearson Challenge, a CMU graduate spent one year in Uganda (through MCC's young adult service program, SALT) working at the educational institution CMU was helping to support. She was then able to return to CMU the next year and report on her experiences to students who were learning about the Pearson Challenge. This development brings depth to the Pearson Challenge initiative and suggests that many possibilities exist with this initiative.

tuition money has "run out" and their costs are now being covered by other sources.

c. *Wittenberg Radio:* For more than fifty years, there was a bulletin board at one of CMU's predecessor colleges called "The Wittenberg Door." This bulletin board has continued at CMU and is a place where topics are raised for community discussion. The topics are ethical, theological, or social, and often a blend of all three. In 2012 students requested permission to launch a new kind of "bulletin board": a series of weekly podcasts called "Wittenberg Radio." This initiative has become a significant forum for discussion on issues important to CMU's community. In collaboration with faculty who teach in the area of Communications and Media, students have learned to create regular thematic broadcasts, arrange for and interview guests, research background issues in order to create meaningful and engaging dialogue, and respond to ideas and concerns in a timely fashion.

## Conclusion

Richard Keeling suggests that we need to think of university as "transformative education."[30] At CMU we work to create an environment where students will gain a network of peers and friends, including faculty and staff, who will be part of their lives for decades to come. University education is far more than simply attending classes. It is important to create a place where students have opportunities to develop and expand their skills and gifts in the context of collaborative and co-curricular learning. The Student Life Department works to provide students with a sense of belonging, a place of involvement and a deepened perspective on faith and responsibility. As we continue to build the partnerships and seamless learning environment of CMU, it is rewarding to see the transformation of students as they grow in skills, character, and leadership, and as they go on to contribute to church and society.

30 Keeling, *Learning Reconsidered*, 1.

# Practice as Knowledge, Knowledge as Practice

*Jonathan Dyck*[1]

## Introduction

Over the last several decades, practicum programs and other "hands-on" learning strategies have become common fixtures at post-secondary institutions across North America. In such settings, various approaches to education that favour "real world" experience and treat practical application as the highest end of classroom learning, from internships to *practica* and cooperative work programs, are often grouped under the banner of "experiential learning." Experiential learning, as one textbook defines it, refers to an educational approach that is based on "learning activities that engage the learner directly in the phenomena being studied."[2] This contemporary focus on integrative learning is meant to encourage students to make connections between academic learning and their own personal aspirations, while providing opportunities for career advancement. In this way, public discussions about higher education frequently position experiential learning as an antidote to overly theoretical academic programs, a way to establish "concrete" applications for one's studies and thus provide a bridge to the job market.[3]

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1 With research and notes compiled by E. Maureen Epp.

2 Jane C. Kendall et al., *Strengthening Experiential Education within Your Institution* (Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 1986), 3.

3 As graduating students encounter an increasingly precarious future, where job security and income equity seem out of reach, experiential learning opportunities fill a gap that might otherwise be impossible to cross. But for those entering more professional fields, experiential learning may in fact hide forms of unpaid labour. For examples of how different Canadian universities and colleges are adapting their programs to include practical job experience, see James Bradshaw, "Work Experience: Should It Be Part of the Curriculum?" *Globe and Mail*, weekend edition, May 18, 2013.

What makes CMU's practicum program unique in this context is also what makes CMU unique: an approach to education that foregrounds practice, not as the application of theory but as a form of knowledge in its own right; and, conversely, an understanding that knowledge is not simply the private accumulation of information but a practice that happens in the world, in particular times and places. As the terms suggest, these characteristics of CMU's approach to Christian education are interrelated, but they are not the same. To recognize practice as a form of knowledge is to see the richness of human activity and potential as a legitimate focus for study and reflection. Yet this is also to acknowledge that practice may not be straightforwardly translated into other forms of knowledge. In broader discussions of Christian higher education, the approach taken by schools like CMU is another way of prioritizing ethics, not as an abstract system or theory to be applied but as a way of understanding and responding to lived experience. Similarly, approaching knowledge as a practice is a way of resisting the temptation to freeze thinking into thought. This is to recognize that knowing happens in the world, that it is not a finished or perfected result, but is an active process: a way of responding to our particular social and cultural contexts. Knowing is, in short, an ethical endeavour.

With this essay, I'd like to suggest that these interdependent approaches to education are what inform CMU's insistence on having a practicum requirement for all students graduating with an undergraduate degree, and that such a requirement is an extension of CMU's broader approach to learning.

## Practice as Knowledge

In his comparative study of different Christian approaches to higher education, Richard T. Hughes highlights the Anabaptist focus on ethics as a distinct feature of Mennonite colleges and universities. In contrast to the Reformed tradition's emphasis on "training minds," he observes, the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition focuses its attention on holistic living and thus has more to do with ethics than intellect.[4] Although Hughes's comparison may appear too stark, it recognizes that education within the AnabaptistMennonite tradition tends toward following Christ in an embodied, practical way.

The Mennonite theologian John Roth describes this approach to education as "incarnational."[5] Roth's use of this term points to an understanding of ethical action modelled on Christ, the Word made flesh; but it also points to an *implicit* understanding of Christian theology, which in an educational setting corresponds to what

4 Richard T. Hughes and Thomas B. Adrian, eds., *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing, 1997).

5 John D. Roth, *Teaching That Transforms: Why Anabaptist-Mennonite Education Matters* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2011).

Thomas Yoder Neufeld has described as an "invisible curriculum."[6] Mennonite institutions have, in other words, placed less emphasis on the systematic logic or coherence of their educational philosophies than on following Christ. When Roth calls Mennonite education "incarnational," the term corresponds to a way of living that values and embodies service, modelled on Christ, as a way of knowing Christ and of knowing the world through Christ. This ethic of knowing can also be found in words of the sixteenth-century German Anabaptist Hans Denck, "No one may truly know Christ except one follows him in life and no one may truly follow him in life except one knows him."[7] As with Mennonite theology, Roth writes, so "the Mennonite philosophy of education has tended to be more implicit than explicit. Rather than consciously *expressed*, it has simply been embodied."[8]

Accordingly, Mennonite education places "a high value on practical, physical engagement with the world, what is often called 'experiential learning.'"[9] In line with Hughes, Roth argues that an orientation toward practice forms an essential part of Mennonite identity, and institutional settings like colleges and universities are merely one manifestation of this trait. This helps explain why CMU's practicum program has a history that predates CMU. Each of CMU's three predecessor colleges—Concord College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC), and Menno Simons College (MSC)—had some form of experiential learning attached to their programming. CMU's current Outtatown Discipleship School (formerly known as the School of Discipleship) began in 1998 as a joint venture between Concord College and the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba; CMBC began to include practicum placements in the mid-1980s, funded in part by Mennonite Central Committee; and *practica* were first offered at MSC in 1995. Together, these programs demonstrate an ongoing commitment to experiential learning at CMU, where students are engaged in local, national, and international settings. For this reason, CMU has made experiential learning—"Learning through thinking and doing"—one of the four key commitments of its larger institutional mission. Academic analysis is thus "complemented by experiential learning in a manner that shapes both thinking and living, particularly through our *practica*, Outtatown, co-op, and internship programs."[10]

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6 "What is, in my view, most 'invisible,' and at the same time most determinative of the overall effect of our institutions, is the ethos, the ambience, the environment, what and how we teach in intended and unintended ways via our 'lifestyle,' individually and collectively." Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, "The Invisible Curriculum—On Being Wisdom's School," In Harry Huebner, ed., *Mennonite Education in a Post-Christian World: Essays Presented at the Consultation on Higher Education in Winnipeg, June 1997* (Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 1998), 129–143.

7 Quoted in 2013 Sawatsky Lecture with Dr. Gerald Gerbrandt—"The Role of the Christian Scholar," YouTube video, 48:55, posted by Conrad Grebel University College, Feb. 8, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MusI-zFfTxI.

8 Roth, *Teaching That Transforms*, 23.

9 Ibid., 138.

10 In many of CMU's degree programs, experiential learning is already a necessary, out-of-

In the practicum course he currently teaches at the Shaftesbury campus, former CMU president Gerald Gerbrandt makes this commitment to experiential learning explicit. Practice, he suggests in his course syllabus, should actually come *before* theory: "Learning through 'Doing' is not putting Theory into Practice. It is more like the reverse. It is the articulation of Theory out of Experience, through keen observation, sensitive reflection, and candid conversation with peers." In the seminar component of their practicum course, students practice skills that have already been an integral part of their CMU coursework. They observe and reflect on their practicum experiences, articulating those experiences in conversation with others. Here, the focus is less about getting a job than it is about preparing to have a job: developing the soft skills necessary to build and maintain good relationships, while considering how one's work fits into the life of the community.

CMU's Outtatown program demonstrates this same commitment to experiential learning by immersing students in settings that might be unfamiliar to them.[11] The program begins in and around Winnipeg, at local camps, retreat centres, and inner-city locations. In the second half of the program, students and site leaders travel to one of three designated international sites: South Africa or Guatemala (two-semester program), or Burkina Faso (one-semester option). Both parts of the program engage students in new relationships and opportunities for spiritual growth. As they reflect on their experiences, listen to lectures by visiting speakers, study languages appropriate to their site country, and work through their assigned readings, students explore the relationship between practice and theory in a tangible way.

Many graduates of the Outtatown program choose to continue their studies at CMU, where they can transfer some of their credits toward an undergraduate degree.

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classroom component. Programs such as church ministry, international development studies, peace and conflict resolution studies, business administration, and music therapy are naturally oriented toward experience outside of a university setting. Music students are similarly required to perform in a variety of practical settings and are thus exempt from the practicum program. For students in less obviously "practical" degree programs, the practicum can take a wide variety of forms, which can be more oriented toward service and volunteering than job experience. Students are given a choice between a school-term practicum of three to six credit hours, which takes place alongside other university coursework; or an intensive practicum where students spend a concentrated amount of time over a minimum of twelve weeks.

11 With its explicit focus on discipleship, Outtatown falls into a category similar to other youth missions programs. But key differences exist between Outtatown and organizations like Capenwray and Youth with a Mission (YWAM). With Capenwray, students experience living in another country while attending Bible school, but they do so without the service orientation and exposure to social and geopolitical issues that Outtatown provides. Like Outtatown, YWAM uses a two-part structure for its "discipleship training," where students are engaged in local activities before participating in overseas service and learning. YWAM, unlike Outtatown, is such a large program with so many interchangeable components that it does not often result long-term community building opportunities. While all three programs have a noticeably evangelical tone, Outtatown is marked by Anabaptist distinctives such as community formation, service, education in cultural theory and geopolitical issues, and a social justice outlook.

While Outtatown operates without some of the traditional academic benchmarks of a university course, with many of its assignments graded on a pass/fail basis, it foregrounds the value that CMU places on experiential learning, offering students practical opportunities that will shape their thinking and may end up directing their future studies.

In another institutional setting, this emphasis on practice as a form of knowledge might seem out of step with academic life. Many university courses are, after all, highly theoretical. Understood within a Christian community of learning, CMU's practicum and Outtatown programs both question the priority of theory and the process of "application" that follows it. This privileging of theory, which has its roots in modernity, is countered in Gerbrandt's approach to CMU's practicum program, where learning happens through doing. The following sections of this essay aim to show why this approach to education distinguishes CMU from other post-secondary institutions and show how CMU's focus on practice can contribute to a broader conversation about Christian vocation.

## Knowledge as Practice

In an essay on the theology of education, the philosopher Nancey Murphy explores the theological resources of the Radical Reformation in light of the modern secularization of educational institutions in the West.[12] Her assessment begins with Alasdair MacIntyre's account of modernity, that since the time of the Protestant Reformation, the category of tradition has, at the very least, been eyed with suspicion if not wholly rejected as a tool of repression. Through his account of the post-Enlightenment scene, MacIntyre concludes that it is not possible to justify ethical claims apart from some tradition of moral reasoning. *After Virtue* and his two subsequent books explore competing traditions in contemporary Western thought, attempting to chart out a path for the future of moral philosophy.[13]

Accepting that the Enlightenment tradition of "encyclopaedic" knowledge (with its fixation on universal reason and objective morality) was effectively unmasked by the now dominant Genealogical tradition of philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche, MacIntyre proposes an alternative vision for the future of academia: one that reaches back to an Aristotelean-Thomist epistemology, where human faculties are ordered such that the easily corruptible will is subject to the intellect. While Murphy values MacIntyre's project, she fears that his conclusions are too optimistic. To offer a corrective, she turns to his focus on the intellect as embodied in social practices. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre offers a definition of practice that is inherently

12 Nancey Murphy, "A Theology of Education." Huebner, ed., *Mennonite Education in a Post-Christian World,* 1–16.

13 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

cooperative. Along with narrative and moral traditions, it is one of three complex backgrounds that are together necessary for the concept of classical virtue.

> By "practice" I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence, which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended.[14]

Murphy endorses MacIntyre's description of practice but tempers its optimism by turning to Nietzsche and Michel Foucault for an acknowledgement of "the epistemic distortions caused by the will to power, and, second, [to] provid[e] a more nuanced account of social practices."[15] Foucault, like MacIntyre, recognizes that knowledge is constituted through social practices.[16] The difference, observes Murphy, is that while MacIntyre understands such practices as leading to truth, Foucault, following Nietzsche, rightly focuses his scrutiny on practices of social control, the interrelationship between knowledge and power.

Murphy's discussion of MacIntyre and Foucault lays some of the groundwork for the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition's emphasis on ethical practice as prior to the intellect. With the right kind of ethical formation, she suggests, Christians will be able to view the world around them with a renewed critical perspective: alert to the corrupting influence of the will-to-power but also instilled with a love for God and neighbour. Murphy calls this a "'Christian epistemic practice'—a communal practice aimed at truth."[17] Here, one's moral formation, one's experience of theology in practice, conditions a different form of intellectual life, and thus "a different perception of reality."[18] Murphy's insight lays out what is at stake for Christian institutions of higher education, some of which still operate according to Enlightenment paradigms of knowledge and reflect its increasingly neoliberal guise.

In the name of free thinking, most universities endeavour to be thoroughly modern places, centres for the circulation of ideas, not unlike a marketplace. Students are seen first as consumers and institutions are, by extension, seen as produ-

14 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 187.

15 Murphy, "A Theology of Education," 7.

16 Foucault demonstrates this approach in his best known works, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977) and *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978). For a more candid account of his view on the relationship between theory and practice and its role in political struggle, see his conversation with Gilles Deleuze: "Intellectuals and Power," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. D. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 205–217.

17 Murphy, "A Theology of Education," 9.

18 Ibid., 10.

cers. As Stanley Hauerwas has suggested, such roles are evinced by the language of "values" and a corresponding ideology of individual choice. "Quite simply," he writes, "the university underwrites the assumption that morality is something we create through individual choice rather than it being the shaping of our lives through the disciplined discovery of the good."[19] Hauerwas's acknowledgement of discipline appears out of step with universities that understand morality as a separable sphere of thought or a hindrance to social and intellectual progress. Educational environments such as these treat moral reasoning, and, more importantly, its application, as an addition or supplement to academic study. But according to Hauerwas this approach to knowledge is incompatible with a Christian view of education. MacIntyre makes a similar point:

> Insofar as education has moral import, it is not in and through the teaching of morality or values or religion or anything else as a separate or additional set of subjects; it is rather that there is a moral import in the whole structure of education, in everything that we teach, and that morality is not primarily about constraints upon how we pursue various goals which we pursue, it is primarily about the nature of these goals themselves.[20]

MacIntyre's corrective suggests an approach to education that is consistent with Murphy's view, that universities from the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition should foster "Christian epistemic practices," ways of knowing through doing that condition a radical outlook.

In a similar way, viewing practical application as something that happens outside of academic study is incompatible with a tradition that understands knowledge as a Christian practice. In settings like CMU, where this tradition is practiced, opportunities for experiential learning are not additions to one's education but are rather extensions of it. For this reason, the connections that CMU students make between their academic education and practical experiences do not simply occur at the level of straightforward ethical initiatives or service-oriented tasks but are found in continuing experiences of social interaction, critical thinking, and an alertness to broader issues of social justice.

## Vocation, University and the Church

At CMU, university education is not considered solely as the path toward a career but as a way of discerning one's calling, one's responsibility to God and one another. Along with the Outtatown program, CMU's practicum program exists to help focus this process, not necessarily by putting students directly into work

19 Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1988), 242.

20 From Alasdair MacIntyre, "Values and Distinctive Characteristics of Teaching and Learning in Church-Related Colleges," quoted in Stanley Hauerwas, "Schooling the Heart in the Heart of Texas," *The State of the University* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 131.

environments (as is sometimes the case) but by creating a space for them to reflect on a wide range of experiences within a community of faith. For students graduating from university, this kind of experiential learning can also help to frame the discernment process as students discover their particular vocations.

According to Rowan Williams, Christians often misunderstand vocation as an obligation that has suddenly been imposed by God.[21] With this sense of imposition, he observes, we tend to see God as an adversary. The natural response to this kind of demand is to try and escape it, to carve out a space in the world where one's desires have room to flourish. But within the Christian tradition, Williams suggests, vocation is better understood as an answering of "the call to be oneself": it is our unique way of "playing back to God his self-sharing, self losing care and compassion, the love because of which he speaks and calls in the first place."[22] Vocation names a way of living in response to God. Rather than eroding human particularity, it suggests a set of practices that engage our differences and thus "mirror" God in unique ways.

This link between identity and vocation within Christian theology is equally present within an Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, where practice and knowledge are closely bound together. Experiential learning at CMU provides students with opportunities to consider their own unique ways of living in relation with God and one another. Both Outtatown and CMU's practicum program raise questions of identity for students by exposing them to a variety of contexts. To see these experiences within a broader discussion of vocation is to recognize that for Christians, identity is not a possession to protect and control. As Williams writes, vocation is "what's left when all the games have stopped. . . . that elusive residue that we are here to discover, and to help one another discover."[23] For Williams, discerning one's vocation is a process of self-discovery that ultimately recognizes selfhood as a gift to be realized in relationship with others. Vocation, in other words, names a practice of identity formation that happens in community.

Near the end of his study of Anabaptist-Mennonite education, John Roth suggests that "Mennonite schools should consciously set themselves the goal of helping students discover their vocation or calling."[24] As he observes, the word *vocation* comes from the Latin, meaning "to be called out," which is not unlike the definition of the Greek *ekklesia*, which names a "called-out assembly or congregation." In this way, we might understand vocation as a sign of one's belonging to a community of others who are working to discern God's calling in their lives. The church names this community of disciples, engaged in its own form of experiential learning, as its

21 "Vocation (1)," in Rowan Williams, *Open to Judgement: Sermons and Addresses* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994), 171–178.

22 Ibid., 175.

23 Ibid., 176.

24 Roth, 151.

members work together to understand what it means to follow Christ in an ever-changing world.

Given the strong relationship between practice and knowledge in the Mennonite Anabaptist tradition, it is worth asking what distinguishes the vocational focus of the church community from that of the university. In his writing about Christian education, Stanley Hauerwas is careful not to collapse the two. Rather, he positions the church as the context where the "material conditions" necessary for sustaining a Christian university are enacted. As he explains,

> By material conditions I do not mean only money, but rather whether churches are constituted by the practices, and no practice is more important than the habits of our speech, habits nurtured by worship, that require the development of knowledges that can challenge the abstractions that are legitimated in and by the current university.[25]

Hauerwas is here describing habits and disciplines that inform the intellectual work of the Christian university. The practices of the church, in other words, condition the practices of knowing that are fostered and explored at universities like CMU. Echoing Hauerwas, Gerald Gerbrandt has argued that "Our experiences, our relationships, our participation in community, our habits and rituals, our practical character all influence how we participate in careful thinking."[26] Such ways of knowing will likely correspond with the ethical practices of the church but, as CMU's practicum program demonstrates, they might not take an instantly recognizable form.

A university like CMU may for obvious reasons appear to be out of step with modern secular universities. And yet, the trend toward experiential learning provides a point of intersection for broader discussions about the purposes of higher education and the nature of Christian vocation. In the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, both church and university communities recognize practices of Christian discipleship as ways of faithful knowing. CMU's commitment to experiential learning thus appears as a central part of its whole approach to Christian education, not as an opportunity to apply what students have learned in isolation but as an extension of their experiences within a community of faith and learning.

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25 Hauerwas, "Schooling the Heart in the Heart of Texas," 133.

26 2013 Sawatsky Lecture with Dr. Gerald Gerbrandt—"The Role of the Christian Scholar," YouTube video, 48:55, posted by Conrad Grebel University College, Feb. 8, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MusI-zFfTxI.

# Capitalizing on Borderland Fecundity

*David Wiebe*

In *Borders and Bridges: Mennonite Witness in a Religiously Diverse World*, Peter Dula closes the book with a chapter on bridge building between diverse groups. He quotes Rom Coles who in turn reflects on Barry Lopez, American nature writer, who examines "ecotones"—border zones between different ecological communities, such as those between a wood and a meadow. Ecologists know that those border zones often harbour a greater variety and density of life than either the forest or the grassland alone. These "special meeting grounds … charges such border zones with evolutionary potential."[1]

The border zones of human interaction are found between different cultures or nationalities: male and female; and for our purposes, between church and university. Quoting Coles: "Western civilization has a long and dark history with respect to edges; it tends to view them as indicative of an evil that lies on the other side; it constitutes them as regions to be forever thrust back and ultimately eliminated at the moment when we conquer the other."[2]

And Dula observes Western civilization has often turned the borderlands into spaces of desolation instead of fecundity. Such an approach is simpler; less complex. Uncertainty and the effort required to manage all the variation is mitigated or eliminated.

As a former leader of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada, and currently of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB), I see the value placed on education by the church, and simultaneously, uncertainty about the value of schools as they advance in academic sophistication. When the church

1 Peter Dula and Alain Epp Weaver, eds., *Borders and Bridges: Mennonite Witness in a Religiously Diverse World* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2007), 160–161.

2 Ibid.

is at its best, its educational institutions should be an integrated expression of its aim and character, equipping disciples for faithful followership of Jesus Christ and impact in their world. Whether viewed positively or negatively, the church-school intersect is an ecotone of a particular type, and worth exploring. Despite and because of the dangers or complexities in this border zone it appears to be "charged with potential"—perhaps one could say ecclesiological potential—to paraphrase Lopez.

Gerald Gerbrandt was known to describe CMU as "a university of the church for the world." It was on his lips at every public occasion, therefore it certainly must have been on his mind and heart—though never accepted as an official CMU vision statement or marketing slogan.

I am personally inspired by Gerald's slogan. Since the Mennonite Brethren participated in CMU as a partner organization I took interest in how CMU was formed, how it evolved, and especially how it was viewed by the Mennonite Brethren constituency. Some say his slogan simply was never run through the channels for approval. Jack Suderman (accompanying chapter) identifies a deeper reluctance.

That phenomenon may be attributed to the challenge of managing both the fecundity and dangers of an "ecotone."

At the ICOMB Higher Education Consultation in 2011 I suggested a continuum that might help describe the challenge of a Christian school like CMU. At the one end are the cultural expectations and goals for the "university in the world"—in CMU's case the liberal democratic Canadian context. At the other end are the ecclesiological expectations of the church—the "owner" of CMU. The university itself is somewhere in the middle, and will edge more toward one end or the other, depending on policies (the role played by administration and board) and academic conditions (the role played by faculty in their interactions with students).

This continuum sets up two ecotones of interest for me—the school/social context border zone, and the school/church border zone. With this essay I want to explore how these ecotones might be characterized, and lay out a possible agenda for church-school collaboration with a *telos* of faithful witness to Christ in the world via the school "product"—i.e., students living out their Christian ethic and convictions.

## Church-based Institution Meets Canadian Liberal Democracy

The vision to establish a Mennonite university is not new. Mennonites value education to the highest level, and CMU is another in a growing list of Mennonite universities established in the liberal democratic milieu of North America.

A liberal democracy presents a relatively unrestricted opportunity for exploring ideas and applying them within society. So on one hand our society offers a welcoming hand to the church-based university. But the liberal democratic milieu also places expectations which often run up against the convictions of the church.

Not the least of these would be expectations of the state for unquestioned support of its aims in terms of patriotism, and cultural expectations in terms of success (financial, status, etc.).

The Christian scholarly community has sought to understand this struggle. A recent effort is *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society* edited by Michael L. Budde and John Wright. The book collects individual papers presented at a conference of Christian scholars in 2002 under the premise: "start first with a robust notion of the church-as-a-distinctive-people called into being by the Holy Spirit to continue the priorities and practices of Jesus Christ in the world."[3]

Wright diagnoses the battle over Christian higher education as a tension to either produce elite civil servants or to form stewards of the Church. He outlines how the church has succumbed to the pressure of our liberal democratic society through its own evolution within this milieu. He agrees with William Cavanaugh's observation that the idea of "religion" came to define a generic category of human experience. This allowed such experience to come under state control in its effort to direct ultimate allegiances. "Religion is no longer a matter of certain … practices within the Body of Christ, but is limited to the realm of the 'soul' and the body is handed over to the State." Christianity became a set of beliefs, disembodied and relegated to individual pursuit.[4]

The result: "Religion is a consumerist option for shaping individuals … that, once abstracted from its communal origins, then may and indeed must impact the public sphere, for this is the only sphere with meaning outside of the individual. Not only does education focus on knowledge derived from and for the public sphere, the public sphere remains the ultimate arbiter of the contributions one might make to a greater good. Yet it is the public sphere that the state ultimately controls."[5] Divide and conquer.

Thus a church-based school, to be successful (and keep institutional vitality *vis-a-vis* society), faces severe and very realistic temptations to lose Christian vitality and values in order to prepare its members (students, faculty, et al.) more effectively to participate in the benefits of society at large. Many have historically already capitulated and labelled themselves as "secular" institutions. Wright cites Princeton, which once was a church-based university, now on record as saying it only offers education and deliberately tries to stay away from any goals of moral or character development of the student.

Despite its Christian veneer, the liberal democratic society in which we live is victimizing the Christian school in North America. In fulfilling the desire of a

3 Michael L. Budde, *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*, eds. Michael L. Budde and John Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 8.

4 John Wright, "How Many Masters?" in *Conflicting Allegiances*, eds. Michael L. Budde and John Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 20.

5 Ibid., 20–23.

school's ecclesial constituency to initiate themselves and their children into the society, all is well until, in retrospect, the shift of institutional loyalties from the church to the liberal society becomes obvious to all involved. The ecclesial school that is successful according to our culture's demands will have trained its students' spirituality with no ties to concrete Christian communities. Being part of a church is not necessary for the kind of spirituality validated by the social system they are being trained to be successful in.

Thus the church-based university is in a quandary. The church wants its young members initiated into society while maintaining their loyalty to the church. Yet society holds various powers of legitimacy over the school, and the key tenet of legitimation is that students learn to keep Christian convictions to themselves in service of the secular nation-state.

The Canadian context adds the layer of secularity to the American backdrop of Budde and Wright's discussion. We expect political and social leaders in the Canadian context to eschew all reference to religion and personal convictions in that realm. Thus the pressure on a school like CMU may be doubly strong—there is no space even for Christian rhetoric that a Christian school and its "product" might use to tie itself to Christian values.[6]

## State-approved University Meets the "Owning" Church

CMU continues the centuries-old Mennonite educational legacy of equipping our students for various roles in society under the teachings of the church. Mennonites expect their schools to play a significant role in discipling their next generation into Christian faith and strong ethical convictions, while offering valuable certification and degrees.

But here too are expectations. Church members expect their children to absorb the convictions of the church. They don't want them to come home with strange questions or bewildering conclusions already drawn. Criticism mounts. Donations dry up, they quit sending students, and churches develop a negative overriding sentiment about their own schools. They send them to the "evangelical" school down the highway, hopefully for a more guaranteed result. But there are also parents who also see their children benefit directly from the Christian university environment, and are pleased with their faith, practice, and readiness to work in the world.

Church leaders have a mixed view. On the one hand pastors receive their qualifications for ministry leadership within Christian higher education, yet they don't like the politics of managing disgruntled parishioners. They dislike discovering graduating students who aren't positioned to serve the church.

Church involvement in governance carries another element of pressure. At the beginning, the church and school design structural closeness, and populate the

6 One could debate whether it's better to have no social room for even a veneer of faith or to have that expectation. It's one of the fascinating components in the topic of Canadian-American differences.

board with church leaders who have vision and heart. But as the university grows, the actual size of operation results in a separate charitable or organizational identity from its church owner. The type of board member required goes beyond the usual boundaries of church interest and oversight. The church connection diminishes. Distance is further increased as the school responds to accrediting regulations and government funding requirements.

Faculty are another, and in many ways the most important, factor. They serve the students directly, and can embody the church's convictions at the point of impact. Hiring policies can tilt the school toward church or society. Church-based universities may have faculty hiring policies that keep them close to the church (e.g., Christians only). Such policies vary from school to school, but those who have removed that requirement in an effort to correspond with the demands of academic freedom or egalitarian hiring will see distancing from the church over time.[7]

William Cavanaugh probes this problem, challenging the arrogance of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). While its original idea to protect faculty in order to foster the development of research and new ideas was admirable, subsequent statements (1940, 1970, 1988) charge that a church-based school, or division of a university, simply cannot purport to offer academic freedom (per its definition).

Ultimately, authority in the church is to be found in its orthodoxy, which itself is tied to upholding tradition as a community. The pressure of legitimacy within the social institutional order is to discover the new and make one's mark as an individual. If a church school tightens its grip on orthodoxy, it may lose accreditation from the social structures. If it loosens its grip on orthodoxy to fit with the social guidelines, it will lose its soul (preceded by constituency support). Thus the church school is caught in the middle.

Cavanaugh calls for a re-examination of the definition of academic freedom. Noting that the original freedom to research and teach new ideas came from the German schools, he clarifies a key difference. German professors were expected to try to win students over to their point of view while teaching the various angles, whereas American professors are expected to present all sides without attempting to "bias" students toward a choice. Such "negative" freedom, if employed, leaves the learning environment too undirected for the church-based university.

"Positive" freedom, says Cavanaugh, is the freedom to explore within the boundaries of orthodoxy. The truth does not confine us but frees us (John 8:32). If truth is the object of the academic search, then it is not confining to say that the

7 Ronald A. Wells, "The Church-Based University," review of *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*, Michael L. Budde and John Wright, eds., and *Can Hope Endure? A Case Study in Christian Higher Education* by James C. Kennedy and Caroline J. Simon, *The Christian Century,* July 26, 2005. Hope College is one of few schools that reversed faculty hiring policies to reposition itself closer to its church owner.

search must be guided by its *telos*. The loss of teleology in the modern era has not liberated research but merely cast it adrift. Construed positively, freedom is that which allows us to achieve some worthwhile goal.

"The incoherence of a curriculum guided by little more than the orthodoxy of diversity of views can breed not freedom, but cynicism. Simply freeing a student to choose does not necessarily enable a student to choose well. Mere negative freedom in the absence of positive freedom is a trap … .The ecclesially based university is better equipped to promote freedom precisely because it has a fuller understanding of the quest for truth."[8]

## Richness to Harvest—Some Global Possibilities

This set of ecotones (or perhaps, one ecotone of church meets society with CMU dwelling in the middle) provides a glimpse of the CMU challenge. Will it continue as a quality, churchly university, turning out students with orthodox convictions ready to succeed in business, politics, service, and yes—church ministry? Can a university maintain a self-definition which is explicitly theological? Can CMU be a "university of the church for the world?"

Greatness is possible—but it lies in taking advantage of the fecundity of this enriched and perilous zone. The possibility and demands of Collins's "genius of the AND" comes to mind.[9] Budde and Wright suggest that a church-based school address three major themes.

The church-based university must maintain a theologically based *telos*: to teach students how to order Scripture's diversity in the light of theological (and contextual) considerations.[10] The second theme aims at the role of faculty—beginning with humility in submitting to the collective orthodoxy of the sponsoring church, reassessing academic freedom, and accepting the role they play in intentional spiritual formation. Third, the school itself (through all personnel) needs to promote and abide by the ecclesia's intrinsic values and practices.[11] To the first two of these themes I offer the following very brief comments.

To the theme of *telos*, Jack Suderman adds a critical definition: the "ecclesial DNA." This is where CMU stands to provide a very unique offering in the Canadian context. I won't add anything here to the rich proffering on this theme in his chapter.

To the theme of the role of faculty, a call for faculty humility is probably contro-

8 William Cavanaugh, "Sailing Under True Colours: Academic Freedom and the Ecclesially Based University," in *Conflicting Allegiances*, 47–50.

9 See James Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap … and Others Don't* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2001).

10 Stephen Fowl, "The Role of Scripture in an Ecclesially Based University," in *Conflicting Allegiances*, 173.

11 Todd C. Ream and Kevin K. Wright, review of *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*, Michael L. Budde and John Wright, eds., *Christian Scholars Review*, Fall 2005.

versial, and assuredly complicated. Faculty members deserve and desire to maintain academic rigour and freedom to research. Faculty members are responsible to advance theological understanding, and often are far ahead of the church because of their studies in various specialties. It takes great humility to submit to the needs and desires of the church for relevant assistance in the church's mission—often in ways that betray ignorance, and worse—indifference—to available knowledge. I would defer to Cavanaugh's analysis and challenge, briefly alluded to above and worth exploring more fully in Budde and Wright.

To the third theme—the school's capacity to abide by the ecclesia's intrinsic values and practices—it is my observation that a school can go a very long time appearing to be onside with the church, while internally it is separating. It takes diligence and persistent review of policies and directional momentum to detect whether and how far the school is distancing itself from its church sponsor(s).

In collaboration with Suderman and interested parties based in the church, I offer two comments on this theme, derived out of my experience with ICOMB and the global fellowship of churches and schools.

First, engage with other schools in our global fellowship. In 2011, ICOMB hosted its second Higher Education Consultation at CMU. This international event drew together almost 100 delegates from schools around the world under the topic "Church and School: Compañeros (Co-Labourers) in Growing People of God."

The goal of such consultations is for our post-secondary schools to "think together about the pressing issues that face us in our churches and schools." The purpose of this event was "to strengthen the relationship between church and school in the shared task of growing mature people of God who will incarnate Jesus's way in the world."[12]

Organizers were fuelled by a vision of fecundity within the borderlands of such an event. Participating institutions varied greatly in size and organizational sophistication, coming from vastly different economic contexts. To be sure, the event stretched the imagination for relevance. What does the president of a full-program university of several thousand students in a rich country discuss with the president of a church school of twenty students studying the Bible in an impoverished country? Yet interaction was rich.

Such cross-cultural dialogue will keep a North American school in touch with the contextual issues of sister schools in the global family. Further, faculty exchanges and student exchanges are critical. Such exchanges need to go both ways, and I submit they are critical to gain and regain perspective when the Western cultural milieu seems to demand ultimate allegiance.

Second, invest in convening with church leaders. ICOMB delegates (church representatives) said there "was a strong sense that church and school had indeed edged closer together." It was significant that the event put church and school-

12 ICOMB, *Proceedings of the 2011 Global Higher Education Consultations on Church and School—Compañeros in Growing People of God: Proceedings*, 2011.

based delegates together in the same room to hear papers, attend workshops, have meals, and sleep in the dorms together.

The power of life-on-life community is not to be underestimated. The 2011 consultation appealed to church and school to work harder at finding ways to convene, to discuss matters of mutual concern, and to foster the school-church relationship.

## A "Manifesto"

As a final note, I offer something of a manifesto for the church-based university border zone. Dalton Reimer, Senior Associate and Faculty Emeritus of the Centre for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at Fresno Pacific University, was Global Education Facilitator for the International Community of Mennonite Brethren for eight years. He recently submitted a reflection piece to ICOMB, outlining his convictions that partnership between church and school is fundamental for a consistent Christian *telos* in higher (and primary) education.

Christians are called to follow Jesus, but not alone. We follow in the context of Christian community; that is, the church. Our understanding of the church, moreover, critically shapes how we do education in our church schools. I offer the following as core understandings with suggested implications for both our schools and churches.

*The Church is a Global Community:* If this is so, then our schools will teach their students to think and act Christianly—both locally and globally. Likewise, churches will share their resources in support of their church schools—both locally and globally, with those of greater means, in particular, sharing with those of lesser means.

*The Church is a Witnessing Community:* If this is so, then our schools, too, will be witnessing communities, both to their immediate students as well as the local and global communities with which they interact. Likewise, churches will empower their schools to be witnessing communities through prayer and settings for student practice—both locally and globally.

*The Church is an Interpreting Community:* If this is so, then our schools will teach their students to be informed interpreters, of Scripture to begin with, but also of current social and ethical issues through the lens of Scripture. Likewise, churches will model for their schools what it means to "loose and bind" as an interpreting community, and so enlarge the educational context for learning.

*The Church is a Discipling Community:* If this is so, then our schools will not only shape the thinking of their students, but will nurture the whole person through both formal and informal curriculums and the modelling of faculty. Likewise, churches will provide continuing nurture and support of students who come from their particular congregations, but also others, including those who may be seeking a church home.

*The Church is a Prophetic Community:* If this is so, then our schools will provide

insight as "Seers" on current issues of the church and society, address these issues with love, and work together with leaders in church and society to develop alternative models of justice and righteousness. Likewise, churches will engage in the same, and also make available to their schools the extended range of experience and wisdom represented in the membership of the church.

*The Church is a Community of Shalom (Peace):*If this is so, then our schools will not only teach peace, but also model peace by developing student discipline systems that are restorative rather than retributive, faculty and staff development systems that are growth oriented rather than punitive, cooperative decision-making processes, and the like. Likewise, churches will model similar means of doing discipline, nurturing member growth, and making decisions that may be emulated by their schools.[13]

## Conclusion

Recently Trinity Western University instituted a law program. This generated a response from the Canadian Council of Law Deans urging the Federation of Law Societies, which approves establishment of any new law schools in Canada, to declare TWU's program illegitimate because of TWU's "community covenant." This lifestyle commitment is signed and accepted by all incoming students and faculty. The rationale is that if TWU is biased in this way, it can only turn out lawyers who are biased, and therefore unfit for the practice.[14]

TWU was publicly defended in several Vancouver Sun opinion editorials. This included an article entitled "A free society should tolerate a Christian-based university," which referred to TWU's successful defense of its Community Standards against a lawsuit by the BC College of Teachers which went to the Supreme Court of Canada.

TWU's story shows that it takes great wisdom and courage to be a church-based university in Canada. Everyone involved needs to be "on board" for the school to stay connected to the church while achieving legitimacy in society, and to effectively make it happen long term.

Jack Suderman, a churchman to the core, sees CMU's presence as the church's witness in the academy. And this, he argued correctly, is not a marginal part of its self-identity; it is central to CMU's self-understanding. "CMU," he said, "is not only the academy in the church; it is the church in the academy."

Anglican Bishop Tom Wright, at a Council of Christian Colleges and Universities conference recently said, "If I were in charge of a Christian educational institution, I would want prayerfully to consider how to educate the next generation so that they could wisely and humbly exercise this triple spirit-given ministry: how do

13 Dalton Reimer, unpublished report to ICOMB, March 4, 2013.

14 Dwight Newman, "Canadian Law Deans Attack Right to Religious Diversity," *Vancouver Sun*, Sec. A, January 23, 2013.

we shape and form a generation in and through whom the Spirit will convict the world of sin (in the face of our Western arrogance and assumed moral superiority), of justice (in a world where the biblical meaning, justice for the poor, has been obliterated by "justice" in the shape of state-sanctioned violence), and of judgement (in a culture that acts as if it is the arbiter of truth)?"[15]

It is in that "border zone," fraught with opportunity and failure, that stands "a university of the church for the world" in all the richness that it might offer.

15 Cameron McKenzie, "The Role of Christ-Centred University Education," *Providence University College and Seminary EyeWitness* 5 no. 1 (Winter 2013).

# Church, University, and World

*Robert J. Suderman*

## Introduction

It is a privilege to honour the prodigious contribution of Gerald Gerbrandt to the formative task of the church. His immersion in the vocation of forming and shaping the church through the channel of formal education has been persistent, methodical, and tenacious. Indeed, it is now deservedly legendary.

History shows that the church's relations with the state have been rocky: from enmity to marriage, from marriage to divorce, from divorce to cohabitation. This relationship has been under close public scrutiny and critique at every turn.

Equally thorny, but much less palpable, has been the relationship between the church and the academy. This too has undergone variations on similar themes: antagonism to cooperation; cooperation to cooption; cooption to suspicion; suspicion to resistance. But the waves of change in this realm have been much less visible. The shifts have come slowly and subtly. At times, they have been one thing all the while masquerading as another. To discern the best paths has required astute awareness of the dynamics, and wise attention to alternatives. Gerald's contribution through these many years has been wise and unrelenting.

Two encounters with Gerald come to mind immediately. Both can frame this essay as reflecting his passionate commitment to Christian education, to the church, and to the world.

In 2001–2002 the Conference of Mennonites in Canada was undergoing its own twin-wave tsunami: uniting her self-identity with her sister denomination, Mennonite Church, and structurally dislodging herself from nearly two centuries of organizational dance with the sister churches in the United States. In this realignment Men-

nonite Church Canada was born. Practically, this meant that everything needed to be redefined and redesigned. MC Canada wanted a simple, user-friendly organization that would embrace our ministries in easily understandable structures. We limited ourselves to only three "Councils": the Formation, Witness, and Support Services Councils. Each ministry was then assigned a primary administrative and accountability "home." We assigned our ownership of and administrative connection with Canadian Mennonite University to—obviously—the Formation Council. Gerald responded immediately, before the heat of the email could cool off. His point was that CMU sees its contribution to the church equally as "witness" and as a "support service," and that it felt like an insult to pigeon-hole it into the "formation" box. We talked. He was right, of course. CMU's presence was the church's witness in the academy. And this, he argued correctly, was not a marginal part of their self-identity, it was central to CMU's self-understanding. "CMU," he said, "is not only the academy in the church, it is the church in the academy." I couldn't agree more. But for simplicity sake's, we still kept it, administratively, under the Formation Council.

Another example of Gerald's resolute and judicious efforts to express the appropriate relation between the church and the academy is his now infamous attempt at a motto: "A university of the church for the world." As CMU struggled to define its identity and role, I heard Gerald use this slogan repeatedly. And it began to appear in his writings. And we began to notice that other CMU spokespersons—professors, staff—would use it too, but always with the disclaimer, "As Gerald would put it . . ." I asked about this. If this is a motto that usefully describes the vision and mission of CMU, why was it always described as "Gerald's" slogan, and never as the CMU motto? We received various red-faced and sheepish responses, basically saying that this motto, although Gerald's favourite, could not pass approval by the needed authoritative bodies because of the close connection it implied between church and school. If a motto were to highlight one element of "doctrine," e.g., ecclesiology, there would be nothing to argue against not including others elements of "doctrine," e.g., divinity of Christ. I suppose this slogan, a very good one in my opinion, will go down as one of those attempts by Gerald to articulate clearly his vision for the school, but to not impose it.

The invitation to reflect on Gerald's contribution provides the opportunity to think through carefully again what it means to be a church-related college and a college-related church. This is not a new agenda for me. It has been central to my thinking for some forty-five years of church leadership.[1]

## Situating Ourselves

It will be helpful to begin our reflections about education and the church by situating ourselves in terms of some of the basic assumptions and language we bring

1 Much of what follows is taken from my paper to the Consultation on Education in Basel, Switzerland (May 2012). This consultation was called together by Mennonite World Conference, and included Mennonite educators from more than twenty countries in the world.

to the discussion.

> *He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out* (John 10:3).

The Greek word here translated as *leads them out* is *exago*. It shares the same roots as the Latin word *educere*, which in turn is the root of our word *educate*. In both root languages, *educate* is a compound word, *ex* (as is frequent, the x has been dropped in Latin) means "out of" or "away from." The compound Greek word *ex-odus*, for example, is the road out of, away from. *Ago* and *ducere* both mean to guide, lead, or direct. *Educate* then literally means to *lead or guide away from*, or to *lead out of.*

In this sense, Jesus is described as being an "educator," calling his own sheep and leading them away from the sheepfold. Given that the sheepfold in John 10 is likely a not-so-subtle image of the persecuting synagogue of John 9, the *good shepherd* is one who leads people out, away from a particularly harmful and disobedient context.

We might see this as a negative definition of *education.* To be true to this sense, it is important to reflect on what it means to lead and guide people (students) away from and out of where they are now. That is, from what are we disengaging?

I used the word "student." In the Greek New Testament, a learner and student is referred to as *mathetes*, which in turn is normally translated as *disciple*. A disciple is a student, but it does not tell us what the disciple is learning. Or, in the sense of *education*, it does not tell us what a disciple is being guided away from.

There is another New Testament word that may be particularly pertinent to our discussion about *education* in the church, and that is the word *apostello*. This too is a compound word, *apo stello*, the first part meaning "away from," the second part is "to send." An apostle is one who is also sent away from somewhere/something to somewhere/thing else. We could say that a *disciple* is a *student* who learns how to *be sent away* by being guided into learning what we should *leave behind.*

This sense of *education* reminds us of the instruction of the Apostle Paul, who exhorts us: "do not be conformed (*suschematizdo*) to this age (*aeon*)" (Romans 12:2). These words too are instructive. *Suschematizdo* again is a compound word: *sun*, meaning "together," and *schematizdo*, meaning "schemes." *Aeon* is literally translated as "eon," but does not simply refer to the very long time period. It also refers to the priorities and preferences that make up the prevailing spirit of the *eon* (*zeitgeist*). This is why it is often translated as "world," but the idea is not "world" as *kosmos* but as ideological environment. The idea is that we need to be discerning in terms of what prevailing "schemes" should be "de-schematized" and do not deserve our support.

The Apostle Peter, using the same word, says it this way:

> *Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance* (I Peter 1:14).

There is one more word that we need to look at in order to get situated. This one, like the others, also signals a sense of difference and otherness. It is the word *ekklesia* (church). This Greek word too is a compound word, the two roots being *ek* and *klesis*. We are already familiar with *ek*—away from, separate from. *Klesis* is translated *calling* or *vocation*, and *kaleo* is the verb form *to call*. The Paul of Ephesians plays with this root when he says:

> *I beg (parakaleo) you to lead a life worthy of the calling (klesis) to which you were called* (*kaleo)* (Eph.4:1).

It is this same root that describes the church. The church, in its DNA, is a people called to a calling. And this is a calling that is *ek,* a calling of a peculiar people, an alternative community, a community of faith not aligned with all the ideological schemes of our world. It is a people with a vocation distinct from other vocations. It is a people aware of its eon, and not seduced by its assumptions.

*Educere* (education) refers to this process of identifying the distinctions of a people with a special vocation. Education is not simply teaching us how to fit in better with the societies that shape us, or how to be good citizens. It guides us into discerning non-conformity with the schemes and desires of ignorance. We could say that *educere* has to do with identity.

## A Second Look

Does such negative talk make us uncomfortable? Talk about leaving, going away from, non-conformity, and sending away sounds very sectarian. It sounds like isolation and non-cooperation, perhaps even intolerance and division. Most of us, I suspect, have been trained to think of education in the opposite terms. Education is something that brings us together, that reconciles, that generates more—not less—tolerance, that unites rather than divides. Indeed, most of our assumptions about "good" education would begin by advocating for these positive things. I suspect we have more of a sense of *con-ducere* (guide toward or with) and not *ex-ducere*. Even the Enlightenment concept of the *univers-ity* is premised on a sense of bringing the entire *universe* together in one place where we can together reflect on it, learn from and about it. It further suggests that such possibilities should be open to all, not just the privileged few. This, in our minds, is education, because it brings us together and does not push us apart.

*Educere* is important but indeed it points to only one part of education. When we leave something behind, we also embrace something moving forward. When we are led out of one sheepfold, we will soon enter another one. The brief analysis thus far has pointed to the importance of distinction and difference. Neither the sense of the word *education,* generically speaking, nor the understanding of *education* in light of our Christian vocation points to indiscriminate information or knowledge for the sake of knowledge. At the very least it is knowledge that generates the wisdom to disassociate from certain assumptions.

This may feel too negative, too restrictive, and not empowering. And certainly, if

we stopped here, it would be just that.

## Education and Identity

Moving away from something entails moving toward something else. We do not simply wish to leave, we also want to arrive. We do not simply reject, we also want to embrace. We do not only want to non-conform, we also want to conform. We do not only want a vocation that is peculiar for the sake of being different: we yearn for a vocation that has ultimate purpose. These double elements are equal partners in education. Some focus on distinguishing, others on identifying. As we contemplate education in and for the church, both trajectories need to be discerned carefully.

Our Colombian brothers and sisters used to say: "If you don't know where you come from and you don't know where you're going, then any bus will do." This is a profound insight. It is unfortunate that too often this insight describes the reality of many folks, including, do I dare say, some academic endeavours. At times, it seems, that the "bus" is made up of knowledge and information, but it has no driver; i.e., it doesn't matter where it comes from or where it's going. It is assumed, at times, that knowledge and information are neutral, not pointing to anything in particular, and that education is a process of being exposed to this busload of information and knowledge for purposes that are defined externally to the knowledge itself.

Education (*educere)* invites us to identify what we leave behind, and what we embrace for our future. This double trajectory of leaving and arriving is, perhaps, best defined by the term *identity*. When we speak of *Christ-ian education*, the identity we seek is one that is faithful to the intentions of *Christ*. It is through this lens that we need to evaluate our educational objectives, goals, and successes.

What are some of the key points of the *identity* we seek, as we think about the role of Christian education? Allow me to mention a few.

"Gospel": *eu aggelion, torah, wisdom. Educere*, in order to be Christian, guides us away from the spirit of the age (*aeon*) and toward the spirit of gospel. The term *gospel,* too, is a compound word: *eu* (good, positive, beneficial) and *aggelion* (message, news, potential). It is the word that the New Testament uses to weld together what was well known as *torah* (law) and *hokmah* (wisdom) with the fresh experience with Jesus of Nazareth—his teaching, life, death, and resurrection (*euaggelion*). The New Testament goes to great lengths to make these connections. Jesus is understood and described as both the incarnation of *torah* and *wisdom*. But both of these have been "educated" in new ways by means of their connection to Jesus. In this sense Gospel is a refreshed education of God's revelation to us. *Gospel* was the heart of Jesus's message to his world and ours.

"The Way" (Acts 9:2): It seems that the people of the refreshed Gospel were known by what they embraced (identification) before they were known by what they left behind (church). They were simply called *The Way*. We cannot be certain where this designation came from. Was it related to Jesus's declaration of being the *way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6)? We don't know. But it is a positive statement expressing not only *away* but *the way*.

"Church": We have already indicated above that *ek-klesia* refers to a people with a special vocation. Being the church is not just anything, it is a particular thing. And that particularity demands *educere* (guiding away from) and clarity of *the way*. The Apostle's hope is that the church can be *worthy of its calling* (Eph.4:1).

"Kingdom": The clearest expression of the *vocation* and *the way* of the church, i.e., where it is heading and how, is found in Jesus's inaugural definition of *euaggelion* (gospel). In the Gospel of Mark (presumably the oldest Gospel), these are the first words spoken publicly by Jesus, and focus his understanding of his mission and, by implication, the vocation of his followers.

> *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news*."

The definition of *euaggelion* in this brief announcement has only two components: God's time (*kairos*) "is fulfilled" (notice the perfect tense); and God's kingdom "has come near" (notice the perfect tense). This good news demands response. This response too is twofold: Repentance (*metanoeo*) is necessary (notice the imperative tense); and this good news must be trusted (*pisteuo*) (note the imperative tense).

The rest of Mark's Gospel demonstrates the how, the what, and the why of the presence of God's kingdom. It is based on kingdom as proclaimed and understood in *torah* and *wisdom*, and demonstrates what these mean in light of *gospel.* Once *kingdom* is seen through the lens of *gospel* the way of a kingdom community comes into sharper focus.

"Leadership": The church as a body needs leadership, and the Holy Spirit supplies it (cf. Acts 14:23; Eph. 4:11–13; Titus 1:5; I Peter 5:1–4). It is important to understand that leadership is not simply a gift of the Spirit to the individual, be it a pastor or other leader. Leadership is a gift of the Spirit to the church. Leadership is a gift to the community to build up the Body of Christ so that the Body can fulfill its vocation. While the gift of leadership is given to persons, the beneficiaries of leadership are the church and ultimately the world as the church is faithful to its vocation (cf. Eph. 4:12–15).

Because this gift is a gift to the community, the accountability for its use also lies within the church. Leaders are not free to do as they please. Leaders must not act only on the basis of private visions received from heaven. Leadership should not be entrusted only to a select group of theologians or saints. The exercise of leadership is to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).

When asked about the exercise of leadership in his kingdom, Jesus responds:

> You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all (Mark

10:42–44).

*Educere* shapes ecclesial leadership away from some paradigms and toward others that reflect the nature and purpose of the Body as an agent of gospel.

Identity generates much debate. In the global church there is both a need for identity and a certain sense of reticence or ambiguity about it. If *educere* is indeed guiding us away from something, we must be clear what this is that we are moving away from. This clarity is identity. The double dynamic of moving away from and toward defined preferences generates identity for the Body.

In Canada, there is a common saying that describes succinctly the obligations of a good hunter or soldier. It simply says: "get ready, aim, fire." Ironically, this somewhat violent image is useful advice also when we think about our need for identity. We need to get ready—put the tools in place, take careful aim—know what it is we wish to target, and then fire—do what is needed to hit the target. In reality, however, too often we reverse part of the order when addressing the need for identity. We get ready and then we fire, and only after that do we realize that we should have aimed more carefully. This generates a crisis of identity, because we have already used up the ammunition before we have aimed carefully.

This inverted process can, perhaps, be seen most astutely in the way we develop leaders for the church. Often leadership is developed by getting the tools ready, and then firing, only to realize later that we didn't really take the time to aim carefully. By that time, of course, it is too late: the ammunition is spent, and the trajectory of the bullet can no longer be influenced.

Let's take the most common example, namely our desire to strengthen our Anabaptist identity. If this, indeed, is our target, we will need to aim carefully in order to hit it. Generating an Anabaptist identity will need to be done intentionally and tenaciously. It will not happen by just getting ready and firing. An Anabaptist identity will not birth itself; it will need dedicated midwives.

Identity is connected to *educere*, which, in turn, must be shaped by gospel, the Way, church, discipleship, apostleship, and kingdom. From this basis, leadership is shaped and identity can flourish.

## The Ecclesial Nature of Christian education

We have sketched above the two-dimensional nature of Christian education: the need to move away from some things and move toward other things. We have also sketched briefly some of the key essentials that we need to move toward. Much more could be said, but this sketch will need to be sufficient for our purposes now.

I do, however, wish to underline the key element that, in a sense, trumps all the others. It is that all educational and pedagogical initiatives that are Christian need to exhibit an ecclesial DNA. Why is this so? Why isn't it sufficient to simply deal with information with integrity? To motivate students to be sensitive about peace and justice? To train students how to strengthen democratic processes? To learn good techniques of conflict resolution and violence reduction? To teach persons to

be good teachers, and nurses, doctors, scientists, and farmers? To teach responsibility for civil society and social transformation? To be good citizens? To teach morality? Why is it necessary to have an ecclesial DNA in all we do?

The simple answer is because in God's plan for the restoration and reconciliation of the world, the primary vehicle for peace, justice, conflict resolution, environment, social transformation, and strengthening our common life, is the church. This is the piece of the strategy that underlies all others. The divine strategy is to form a people that will demonstrate what it means and how things are when God's Kingdom approaches. And so, for education to be "Christian," this same strategy needs to be acknowledged in all we do and teach.

If we want to frame the contribution of our educational efforts in light of its connection to the church, it is important, then, to have a compelling and clear understanding of the church in God's plan for the salvation of the world. Let me state this as succinctly as I can: *I believe that the purpose of the church is to promote, facilitate, nurture, and participate in God's efforts to restore and reconcile the world, and all that is in it, to its intended purposes.* This is a positive definition. The shadow side of the definition, and, I might add, the less politically correct side in our pluralist society, is that God's mission, and therefore the mission of the church, is to deal redemptively with the sin of the world. Reconciliation, restoration, healing, salvation, and liberation all assume that there are non-reconciled forces, fallen situations, illnesses, contexts in need of transformation, and freedoms needed from enslavement. Whether stated positively or negatively, *the vocation of the church is to align with God's mission to restore, reconcile, and save the world from its commitment to paths of sin that lead to destruction and death, and to set it on God's desired path toward abundant life in his Kingdom.*

We are now very aware that we have not always understood the critical vocation of the church as the primary vehicle in God's ministry of reconciling the world. Indeed, often the role of the church as the vehicle has been diminished almost to point of invisibility.

Allow me to give some examples of this. Recently, I participated in a symposium where one scholar outlined carefully the chief emphases of the Anabaptist reformation in the sixteenth century. He highlighted the predictable things: believers' rather than infant baptism, nonviolence rather than just war, separation of church and state rather than cooption, discipleship to Jesus and the centrality of Jesus for Christian ethics, passionate evangelism, martyrdom in witness, the interconnection between faith and works, simplicity of lifestyle, and others. What was most striking for me was what he did not identify; namely, the fact that the nurturing source of all of these emphases, without exception, was the new Anabaptist insight into what it meant to be the church. The critical role of the church in Anabaptist thought was invisible in his presentation.

The primary issue for Anabaptists was not infant baptism; it was what this practice says—or doesn't say—about the nature of a discipled, believing, and visible church. The issue was not nonviolence, but the ecclesial implications of necessarily

being aligned with the state in such a way that its lord took precedence over the lordship of Jesus. We could say that none of the issues identified as key components of sixteenth-century Anabaptism was the primary issue at all. The key was what each of these contributed (or not) to their new insight about the nature, identity, and vocation of the church in the plan of God for the redemption of the world.

A simple way of saying this would be that there were not eight or ten or twelve key characteristics of sixteenth-century Anabaptism. There was only one, namely, their new discovery and insight about the nature and vocation of the church. All the other ten or twelve points were sub-categories of this overarching one.

I give this example, because when we talk about Christian education, we can easily fall into this same trap. We can think of education as developing our capacity to reason, to nurture character, to motivate for citizenship, to train intelligence, to train morality, to transmit knowledge and information, to expose students to wisdom, to strengthen democracy, and so on. But when we speak of Christian education necessarily being ecclesial, all of these points, as good as they may be, are sub-points of the main point; namely, how can the church fulfill its vocation as an agent and paradigm of God's reconciliation in a very needy world?

Let's move a step closer to the life of the church in its educational processes. As disturbing as it may sound, we can and have developed techniques of discipleship, a message of evangelism, participation in social action, and prophetic witness to society in ways that render ecclesiology invisible. In many instances, discipleship training is related to Jesus in a way that is disconnected from the church; evangelism is related to salvation in a way disconnected from the entrance into a community of God's Kingdom, social action is for transformation of society without seeing the church as a viable alternative to do so, and prophetic witness can point to justice and peace without understanding that the church is meant to be a visible sign and agent of both already present in the world. We are, indeed, quite capable of developing educational initiatives labelled as "Christian" without paying significant attention to the primary strategic initiative of God's plan, namely, the vocation of personhood as an engine and vehicle of the message that is being taught. This too is an example of getting ready, firing, and then aiming.

I do not wish to suggest that by developing an ecclesial understanding of our task in education that all issues are resolved. They are not. It is also easy to develop an ecclesial vision that inadequately focuses the intention of God for the vocation of the church.

In an insightful paper, Art McPhee, former professor at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, sketched the unintentional and unfortunate, yet very real, historical impact of our Anabaptist tradition. He identifies four unfortunate tendencies in our churches; tendencies often justified by an appeal to our Anabaptist roots.[2] These are: "Exclusivistic ecclesiology": a tendency to define our "other-

2 Art McPhee, "Barriers Anabaptist-Mennonite History and Tradition Present for the Missional Church Agenda," unpublished paper.

ness" over/against other Christians rather than over/against the world; "Legalistic ecclesiology": a tendency to develop a community of law rather than a community of love; to focus on purist tendencies rather than on agape engagement with the world; "Ecclesiocentric ecclesiology": a tendency to focus ministry on the church rather than beyond the church; "Separatistic ecclesiology": a tendency toward non-cooperation rather than helpful partnerships with others.

Lois Barrett, in an unpublished paper, suggests that the most helpful ways of understanding the ecclesial vocation are neither "isolated nonconformity" in society nor "co-opted engagement" with the culture, but as "nonconforming engagement" with the world. This, she suggests, is most fair to the Anabaptist tradition.[3]

## Every Congregation a Teaching Centre: Every Christian a Student

Two of the implications of what I've sketched above are: Every congregation must see itself as a teaching centre; all Christians must see themselves as students (*mathetes*). One of the gifts of the Spirit is the gift of teaching (*didache*) and it is one of the critical tasks of the church. What is teaching?[4]

In teaching we take seriously both Jesus's admonition that we should be able to "discern the times" as well as we can predict the weather,[5] and the Elder John's admonition to "test the spirits, because not all spirits are from God."[6] As is the ministry of proclamation, the teaching ministry of the church too is devoted to the witness to God's presence among God's people. Teaching, however, is more than proclamation. It involves critical reflection, careful analysis, comparing, contrasting, summarizing, systematizing, and applying all the diversity we find in the biblical witness. The teaching ministry leads us to investigate our own context and experience in the same careful way that we investigate the witnesses of old. In teaching we try to name what is happening. We look at tendencies, trends, and shifts in order to understand better how the biblical witness can be instructive to our own story. Teaching places us firmly on the boundary of the internal wisdom of the church and the external challenges and opportunities present in our culture. In teaching we extrapolate the implications of God's activity in the past and apply them to our experiences in the present. Teaching is a dialogue between Holy Scripture and the many "scriptures" of our time, some of which are very unholy. Teaching is an opportunity to interact with the community and its assumptions. Teaching allows us to hold up presuppositions to the light to determine what spirit is nourishing them. Teaching is where the liberating memory

3 Lois Barrett, "Resources and Supports for the Missional Church Represented by Anabaptist-Mennonite History and Tradition," unpublished paper, 2.

4 This section of the paper is taken from Robert J. Suderman, "Missional Ecclesiology and Leadership: Toward an Understanding of the Emerging Church," unpublished paper, June 2005.

5 Luke 12:54–59.

6 I John 3:18–27; 4:1–6.

of the past informs our lifestyle today, aligning it with what we understand to be the mind of God. Teaching is where history, contemporary experience, and hope for the future are melded together with the forces of our culture through careful communal discernment and dialogue.

Teaching is a critical tool for the processes of disciple- and apostle-making. Every Christian congregation must be a teaching centre and every Christian must be a student.

## Concluding Thoughts

We live in a world desperately in need of engaging the reconciling gospel of Jesus Christ. David Barrett, an American missiologist, estimates, for example, that in the year 1900 there were 34,000 Christians in the world who were martyred for their faith. He estimates that in the year 2000 that number had risen to 500,000 martyrs.[7] In light of this, W.J. Hollenger, a Pentecostal theologian states: "Evangelism is the most dangerous business."[8] So the purpose we have set for ourselves as a church is serious and dangerous business. Jesus suggests that to take seriously such a mission will be tough:

> *Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves* (Matthew 10:16).

This admonition surely is true for every cultural-political context. In some places, like Canada, martyrdom is not anticipated, but the exhortation of Jesus is still equally legitimate. How do we engage our contexts with the reconciling gospel of Jesus Christ? In many places we are in a post-Christendom, post-modern, secular, individualistic, materialistic, inter-faith, pluralistic world. We will need to be intentional about our preparation and our objectives in education. Our educational efforts and initiatives, whether they are schools, curricula for Sunday School, or nurture in Christian homes all need to help to strengthen the church in its purpose to be called, equipped, and sent by the Spirit into engagement with the world with the reconciling gospel of Jesus Christ. And especially, we will need to be very intentional in developing the leadership needed for the church to live up to its ambitious purpose, to call, equip, and to send the church into engagement with the world. To be intentional and deliberate means that we need to aim carefully before we fire.

Wilbert Shenk, noted Mennonite missiologist, in a recent paper, asks perhaps the most important question of all.

> Every ecclesiastical tradition ought to grapple with the question: What is the contemporary missiological significance of this faith tradition? If a faith tradition is unable to engage the present situation in a way that awakens in

7 David B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1986," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10 no. 1, (January 1986).

8 Ibid., 22.

> our contemporaries faith, hope and love, it has become irrelevant. But there is evidence that too many churches have lost sight of this essential task . . . the task of missiology is to continually call the church back to its mandate, not simply to engage in academic pleasantries.[9]

In his presentation, Shenk stated that if a church cannot answer this critical question, it has *ceased to be the church, and it should shut its doors*. This is tough language. I suspect that many cannot answer this question.

I often think about the dynamic and congruent interrelationship that there must be between the teaching of the church and the life of the church. I am reminded of a conversation that a group of us had with Fidel Castro in his office. One statement, pertinent to our topic, sticks out in my mind. He stated: "If the life of the church in Cuba in 1958 would have reflected the teaching about the gospel that I received from the Jesuits in my childhood, there would not have been a Cuban revolution as we now know it."[10] This comment points to the deep chasm that has developed separating the missional presence of the church from the teaching of the church. This is nothing less than the failure of the church to live up to what it is called to be. When such a gulf develops, the gospel is rendered impotent, and the actual witness of the church is undermined.

The daily life of the church is its most potent educational tool. What are we teaching the world that is watching through the life of the church? Does it reveal the *significance of our faith tradition* for our hurting world? The purpose of Christian education is to strengthen the *aim* of the church. It is to make sure that the content and the strategies of law, wisdom, and gospel are the daily bread of the life of the church. Christian education prepares the church for its role in the world. Christian education aims at assuring that the church will be *worthy of the calling to which we are called* (Eph. 4:1–3).

All this to say that the motto—*university of the church for the world*—is actually a good, succinct, and accurate way of making sure that the ecclesial foundation for education is strong.

May the grace of God grant us the wisdom and the courage needed to believe this, to trust it, and then to enact it. May it be so!

9 Wilbert Shenk, "Mission in Anabaptist Perspective," unpublished paper presented at the Association of Anabaptist Missiologists, Elkhart, Indiana, November 11, 2005.

10 In an extended conversation between Fidel Castro and a Canadian Council of Churches delegation in which I was the Mennonite representative; 1988.

# Teaching Voices

# Transforming Learning and Development

*Ray Vander Zaag*

Gerald Gerbrandt, when describing the distinctive mission and approach of CMU to parents, constituents, and the broader public, often stated that CMU is a university "of the church for the world." This chapter explores what this might mean for the field of international development studies. It brings together three related questions. How should international development be understood, so that genuine long-term social well-being is promoted? How should university learning be understood, so that students are prepared for truly meaningful lives in the world? What are the distinctive, faithful understandings of both development and university education that CMU as a Christian university should offer to its students and the field of international development studies?

There is much debate about whether development "works." Some wonder why so much poverty and inequality remain in the world—why has development progress been so slow despite over six decades of development planning and billions of dollars of development assistance? Others contest the very concept of development—should the entire world try to modernize and catch up to the West by following its political and economic models, given the attendant social and environmental problems?

There is also debate about the how the modern university works. From its earliest roles in nurturing human virtues and the life of the mind, since the Enlightenment the university has increasingly focused on the discovery of objective truth. Learning is seen as the acquisition of reliable methods and verifiable, instrumental knowledge, and universities are increasingly expected to prepare (young) workers for jobs in a growing economy. This Western rationalist (and economist) tradition has been challenged by a range of so-called postmodernist approaches, which emphasize the social construction of knowledge, the contested nature of truth and its relation to power. Learning, in these approaches, should be emancipatory, expos-

ing the operation of power, and emphasize the importance of diversity and respect of the "other."

Christianity, particularly in the West, has struggled to retain the relevance of its truth claims in increasingly materialist, secular, and pluralist societies. Yet for people of Christian faith, economic and modernizing models of development and either objectivist, instrumentalist, or relativist theories of knowledge and learning are inadequate for genuine human flourishing. Working for "peace-justice" requires paying attention to the deeper sources of well-being, such as healthy meaningful relationships with self and others and God. Learning, for maturing adults, requires orienting and committing the mind and the heart to the claims of God and God's incarnation.

The inadequacies of mainstream understandings have led the elaboration of so-called transformational approaches in both development and learning. These transformational approaches emphasize the deep qualitative change in the basic commitments and perspectives of people and society in order for emancipatory learning and social change to occur. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and compare these concepts of transformational development and transformational learning. I will argue that they describe similar key processes and goals that I call hermeneutic stewardship, which can guide the faithful study of international development at a Christian university.

This chapter is organized as follows: The first section will review various understandings of poverty, examining the adequacy of their resulting approaches to development and social change. The second section will explore how several transformational theories in the fields of international development and learning theory each understand the process of social change, and how these relate to my Christian understanding of change. The final section will begin to trace understandings of development and transformation in the current post-secular context of a Christian university, where difference needs to be engaged faithfully by learner-students committed to justice and peace.

## Poverty, Development, and Social Change

Understandings of poverty and approaches to development are directly related—definitions of poverty and understandings of how it is caused determine approaches to reducing poverty and supporting development. Thus an examination of how development can and should be faithfully learned at an Anabaptist Christian university needs to begin with a brief analysis of the evolving ways in which poverty and development are analyzed in mainstream development—and why these may be inadequate.

The most simple and obvious understandings of poverty see it as deficit—as deficits of things and knowledge, and/or as deficits in power and capabilities. Most obviously, poverty occurs when poorer people suffer from deficits in basic material things—they lack food and clean water, adequate housing, minimal incomes, and good education and health-care systems. Commonly used development indicators

such as infant mortality rates reflect and reinforce such a deficit understanding. Somewhat more analytical or explanatory definitions see poverty as the result of deficits in knowledge—poorer people do not know how to read and write, how to use improved agricultural techniques, how to prevent illness or, at a more societal level, how to run cooperative enterprises and effective public administrations and democratic institutions.

Development approaches responding to material- or knowledge-deficit understandings of poverty usually understand development as "catching up" or "sharing"—providing the lacking things and knowledges that are already available in richer more developed countries. And so development programs (usually coming from richer countries) deliver, build, and train. Western aid agencies and multilateral development banks finance national-level infrastructure like roads, power grids, and large-scale irrigation systems, provide expert "technical assistance" to health and agriculture ministries, and give policy advice so that better (modern) tax, trade, and public spending regulations are adopted. Small-scale NGO programs help neglected communities with combinations of goods and training, supplying improved seeds together with agriculture training for farmers, building schools while holding seminars for teachers, providing wells and hand pumps along with training on hygiene and disease transmission. Individual donors in richer countries pay school fees for sponsored children and go on mission trips to build clinics and houses. Most simply, this is a charity model of development, relying on the generous goodwill and commitment to social justice of those already developed.

It is important to state that these approaches have made important differences in the developing world. The proportion of people in poorer countries who are malnourished, die as newborns and children, are illiterate, or become sick with preventable diseases is lower than ever before. A number of the key Millennium Development Goals, particularly the international targets for reducing absolute poverty rates by half by 2015, will likely be achieved.[1] In some contexts, giving and training allow poorer people to make significant improvements in their lives.

Yet these approaches have not achieved the level of change that many had hoped was possible, given the resources invested.[2] Too many people remain hungry, live in deplorable slums, and are vulnerable and excluded. The problem with such deficit models of poverty and their corresponding "give/transfer" models of development is that, too often, they have not produced lasting change based on increased social justice, since they fail to ask what is causing the deficit in the first place. If people lack things or even knowledge, simply providing them with these will not

1 World Bank, "Global Monitoring Report 2014/2015: Ending Poverty and Sharing Prosperity" (Washington: The World Bank and International Monetary Fund).

2 Official development assistance from richer countries has totalled over $USD120 billion per year for the past decade, and over $USD50 billion per year (in current dollars) for the past four decades. Total annual private donations through NGOs have totalled approximately 10 to 15% of official government aid, and increased to $USD30 billion per year for the past five years.

necessarily result in lasting solutions. What happens when the funding for school-lunch programs and vaccination clinics runs out, when the hand-pumps and roads provided by development programs are worn out, or the knowledge obtained is no longer relevant for changing situations? Or worse, what if the goods or knowledge provided by well-intentioned donors were not what was really needed or wanted, or were not the most appropriate response to the causes of poverty? The goods and services freely supplied by aid donors are rarely refused by recipient governments or communities, but this does not ensure they are well-valued or well-used. Thus, a major critique and challenge of most development interventions is that, while they have reduced poverty, they have not produced sustainable development, and improvements produced during projects and programs do not last. Real changes, changes in the underlying causes of poverty, are not produced. As anthropologists might say, many development programs provide "thin" material/technical solutions to the "thick" complex problems of communities and societies.[3]

Unfortunately and ironically, the limited effectiveness of much development programming (which has its roots, in part at least, in deficiency and charity models of development) has caused an increased focus on what is called "development effectiveness", and development approaches that are "results-focused" and show quick and measurable impact. For example, after the 2008 global food crisis, donors funded more school feeding programs and more seed distributions to farmers. These tend to be even thinner solutions to thickening development problems.

In response, other deficit understandings of poverty have focused on social, political, and structural forces, and defined poverty as the result of deficits in power and rights. People are poorer because they lack social power as a result of gender or ethnic discrimination, they lack political power because they are not organized or represented in elite-dominated or corrupt political systems, and they lack economic power because of unjust land distribution, financial systems, and trade agreements. Poorer peoples' rights to social, political, and economic freedoms are not respected. In response to deficits of power and rights, various participatory and empowerment-focused development approaches have been adopted. Northern activists work in solidarity with poor and marginalized groups to empower them and help them organize for their rights. Women's associations are supported as they work for gender equality in girls' education, property rights, and political participation. Democratic electoral systems are strengthened and human rights are monitored. Social justice organizations advocate in partnership with poor-country governments and southern social movements for a more just international economic and political order to regulate trade, investment, and global security.

While these power- and rights-based approaches have been adopted to respond to the limitations of "sharing things and knowledge" approaches to development,

3 Clifford Geertz, one of the founders of modern anthropology, introduced the concept of "thick description." Michael Edwards uses this language in "Thick Problems and Thin Solutions: How NGOs Can Bridge the Gap," *Hivos* (2011).

they too have limitations. When power is conceived of as a thing (or quantity) that can easily be given, built, or taken, these approaches tend to be optimistic (or naïve) about how to create change (and how easy it is to create change). The poor can be consulted and organized, and policies can be protested against or advocated for, but changing deep-seated systems of governance and power is complex, difficult, and slow. Almost by definition, existing structures of social, economic, and political power have emerged and become dominant because of their ability to withstand challenge. In actual practice, the development programming that implements these participatory empowerment approaches often ends up looking like "deficits of things and knowledge" approaches. The budgets of these programs are spent on workshops and seminars, outside consultants, and the salaries of in-country partner-organization staff to provide leadership and training to poorer people. It is assumed that deficits of power and capacity (to claim or respect rights) can be overcome through development programming that "empowers" and "builds capacity." So-called participatory development approaches have been increasingly critiqued, though the language of participation and empowerment remains common.[4]

Again, it should be repeated that such programs are also valuable and have produced important changes. Social movements representing marginalized groups are better organized and more effective than before, the rights and roles of women are becoming more recognized, and civil society groups have increased pressure for reforms of global institutions. Most would agree there is more formal democracy and more accountable (public, corporate, and civil society) governance in the world than ever before.[5] Yet working for changes in these ways is slow, for it attempts to change the economic, political, social and even cultural norms that underlie inequality, discrimination, and marginalization.

There are several deeper reasons all of these deficit understandings of poverty are problematic. First, the principle actors in each of these approaches are usually the already developed—the richer, educated NGO staff from the capital city and northern development agencies. The poor are recipients, assumed to be largely passive and dependent on outsiders to provide (or at least pay for) the things they lack.

4 A key review of successive approaches to participation is Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, eds., *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?* (London: Zed Books, 1994). An example of the continued emphasis on participation and empowerment is the *Code of Good Practice* of the ACT Alliance, a coalition of over 140 faith-based development organizations in Europe and North America.

5 Two examples of organizations that rank levels of democracy and freedom are Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org) and Democracy Ranking Association (www.democracyranking.org). An example of an organization that monitors and works for increased accountability in global (supra-national) arenas such as research and innovation, peace and security, NGOs and global civil society is One World Trust (www.oneworldtrust.org). Even these organizations could be critiqued for prioritizing Western notions of liberal democracy and individual human rights over alternative conceptions of responsibility and justice.

Participatory approaches, while much better in this regard, still tend to assume that the initiative or catalyst for empowerment and change needs to come from the outside. The result is twofold: first, the poor are seen as deficient or inadequate, and this identity can be either internalized or strategically adopted (performed) in the context of development aid relationships; second, the richer developers are elevated and seen as having most of the answers, and so a superior, paternalistic, or even saviour identity can also be internalized by aid workers. Taken together, separation or distance is increased between those helping and those helped, and each becomes the distant "other." Development assistance creates (or reinforces) us-them binary relationships—the helper and the helped, the donor and the recipient, the rich and the poor. Development programming, even when done with the best of intentions, tends to reinforce and reproduce the very hierarchies and inequalities that are at the root of the problems of poverty.

A second reason deficit approaches to poverty and development are problematic is that they are all quantitative—they look at poverty in a static, frozen-in-time, individual manner, abstracted from time and context, and isolated from social relations and social meanings. In response to the limitations of these quantitative understandings, an increasing number of development thinkers have suggested qualitative and relational understandings of poverty and development.[6]

Qualitative approaches to poverty move away from objective measures toward more dynamic and holistic understandings. They define poverty in more ethnographic, situated terms, focusing on how the poor themselves experience and describe their poverty. These human accounts of poverty emphasize such qualitative aspects as powerlessness, fear, exclusion, and hopelessness as markers of poverty.[7] Poverty is not static or independent/individual, nor does poverty exist by itself, within poorer people and their communities. Rather, poverty is the result of relationships—it is produced and reproduced over time through broken and unjust relationships between richer and poorer people within families, communities, nations, and even globally. The focus shifts from poverty, as an objective state of being, to "being poor," as a lived, social, "full-of-meaning" experience. Poverty is not simply undernourishment, but household gender relations that cause women to eat last; not simply illiteracy, but national sociopolitical relations between urban elites and remote rural communities that cause underfunding and poor administration of distant rural schools; and not simply low income, but international political-economic relations that cause low-skilled urban factory workers to work for

6 Yet I should acknowledge that presenting quantitative and qualitative approaches as a binary itself follows a dualistic Cartesian (mathematical) paradigm that polarizes and tends to privilege one or the other. This insight is drawn from J. Pieterse-Nederveen, *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001). Pieterse-Nederveen argues for a "critical holism."

7 Ravi Kanbur, "Economic Policy, Distribution and Poverty: The Nature of Disagreements," *World Development,* 29 no. 6: 1083–1094.

dollars per day producing garments for North American shoppers. These broken and unjust relationships are initially the result of the deliberate actions of those (within families, communities, and societies) who profit from them, and the harm is often reproduced by the internalization of both victims and bystanders of these relations as normal or natural, inevitable or unsolvable. These social relations cause not just a poverty of things, but a poverty of being and meaning—women who are trapped by gendered powerlessness, rural indigenous groups who see themselves as second-class citizens, factory workers who are too desperate or too fearful to be able to organize for decent minimum working conditions. These qualitative approaches can be summarized as focusing on poverty in terms of meaning, identity, and social relations.

Corresponding to these qualitative understandings of poverty are approaches that define development in terms of well-being, sustainable livelihoods, *buen vivir* (living well), human flourishing, and even simply happiness. These more holistic, comprehensive, and multi-dimensional terms are now more commonly seen as the ultimate ends of development. Concepts such as "well-being" and "living well" combine objective assessment of poorer peoples' lives with their subjective accounts of how well they are doing and feeling. Also relevant here is recent scholarship investigating the role that religion and spirituality play in development, both in shaping understandings of well-being in the lives of members of poorer communities and in the motivations and approaches of faith-based development agencies.[8]

There are a number of important characteristics of these approaches to development. While material well-being is important, it is seen more as means rather than ends. They integrate material ("what people have"), relational ("what people can do and how they are treated"), and subjective ("what people feel and believe") dimensions. The ends or goals of development are seen as more contextual and localized, not necessarily simply adopting and catching up to the patterns of life followed in richer countries. It thus avoids top-down and paternalistic prescriptions for development programming, and emphasizes the responsibility and agency of poorer peoples themselves to direct their development. Concepts such as well-being recognize the environmental unsustainability and global limitations of simply and continually increasing material well-being. They challenge the individualism of Western approaches, by emphasizing that "people become who and what they are in and through their relatedness to others."[9] Well-being is not a quantitative thing that belongs to individuals, but a communal process that happens in relationships. Or as suggested above, well-being *is* healthy relationships. This reinforces an under-

8 Good introductions to this literature are Severine Deneulin, *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* (London: Zed Books, 2009) and Emma Tomalin, *Religions and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

9 Sarah C. White, "Bringing Wellbeing into Development Practice." (University of Bath WeD Working Paper 09/50, 2009), 9.

standing of development as two-way process between the collective and the individual, between poorer and richer people, between the local and the global.

Thinking from a Christian perspective, one might argue that the failure of development to achieve its promises flows from the fact that mainstream development theory has grown out of the Enlightenment ideas of progress and modernization. The technical and social (economic, political, administrative) knowledges transferred by development programs are assumed to be objectively true and culturally neutral, since they have been attained through reason alone. From the Christian viewpoints at CMU, though, any development theory that does not take into account the deeply relational nature of human life cannot deliver human flourishing.

## How Does Social Change Happen?

If the problems of poverty are so thick and complex, development programming so difficult to do well, and the goals of authentic development (well-being) are so contextual, relational, and holistic, how can we understand social change to happen? How is "real" lasting development created? This, of course, is a topic that has been the subject of much thought and theorizing, and the discussion that follows will obviously be limited and perhaps basic. But this is a key question that is foundational in approaches to international development, in that the practice of development explicitly attempts to create positive social change. Thus students (and faculty) in university international development studies programs must have a clear "theory of change" to guide their learning in development and future work in social change organizations.

A concept frequently used in development is *transformation*. Organizations, aware of the superficiality of common thin or technical development (poverty reduction) approaches and the difficulties of creating deep social change, often claim their programs are "transformational"—that they create qualitative change in the basic structures and patterns of the (social, economic, political) systems in which their programs intervene. Faith-based development organizations have also often adopted the language of transformation, as it provides a way for them to include change in the most basic (i.e., "religious") human commitments and worldviews as an element of their programming. I will next consider two "transformational development" approaches and how they understand the poverty and the process of social change. I will also compare these approaches to concepts of transformation used in adult education and human development, showing how the insights of these other social sciences support transformational understandings of social change.

Bryant Myers proposes a theory of "transformational development" in his book *Walking with the Poor*.[10] Myers explicitly bases his approach on an understanding of poverty that is relational and identity-based. People are poorer because they are caught in webs of broken, distorted, and unjust relationships that trap or bind them in poverty. These webs includes five types of relationships: social relationships with

10 See Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (rev. & exp. ed.) (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011).

immediate community; political, economic, and cultural relationships with those who are considered distant "others"; resource relationships with the natural environment; the relationship with self; and (reflecting Myers's faith convictions) relationships with God or the divine.

Myers argues that these broken and unjust relationships result in marred identities, both for poorer people as well as for richer people (i.e., both for the victims and perpetrators of these broken and unjust relationships.) Poorer people often have accepted or internalized (sometimes over the course of generations) their poverty and broken relationships, which can result in low self-esteem and resignation. While Myers at times appears to blame the victim and ignore those poorer people who actively resist their oppression, his analysis can be seen as similar to conscientization approaches such as that proposed by Paulo Freire,[11] which emphasize the *conscientization* or "awakening" of the poor to the sociopolitical conditions of their oppression. As importantly, Myers also sees these marred identities as being imposed on poorer people by the "non-poor" (or constructed by dominant social and cultural discourses, to use post-structuralist language), through relationships based on colonialism, sexism, racism, and other forms of privilege, domination, and oppression.[12] Even when the poor have not internalized a "marred identity" but actively resist their low status, the powerful systems of the non-poor are able to impose this identity on them in the development planning documents and other narratives they control. The result is that the identities of the non-poor are also marred, according to Myers, for they have adopted "god-complexes" that provide self-justification for their domination of household, community, national, and international social, economic, and political relationships.

Transformational development, in Myers's conception, occurs only when there is a qualitative change in relationships and identities: sharing and respectful relationships are established within households and communities; just, peaceful, and more equal relationships are established between poorer and richer groups within countries and internationally; and relationships of care and stewardship are established with the resources of the natural world. These relationships require healthy "self-relationships" or identities—poorer people must see themselves as being capable and having gifts and rights, and richer people must lay down their god-complexes and believe their gifts and capabilities are for serving and sharing, not selfish or paternalistic control.

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11 Freire's best-known works include *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970, 2000) and (with Ana Maria Araujo Freire) *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1994).

12 I observed and described this dynamic in my dissertation on a NGO community development program in rural Haiti: Raymond Vander Zaag, "'We do not yet have development:' Encounters of Development Knowledges, Identities and Practices in a NGO program in rural Haiti" (Diss. Carleton University, 1999); online at http://idl-bnc.idrc.ca */dspace/bitstream/10625/22907/1/116670.pdf*.

Writing from a Christian faith perspective, Myers roots the possibility of these transformational relational and identity changes in people's relationships with the divine or God. Humans have a limited capacity to make such change on their own, but require a faith- and grace-filled relationship with God, and self-identities as beloved of God, to make such deep change. Myers describes this type of spiritual change as personal and individual, but also possible at the level of communities and in the principles and worldviews that govern social, economic and cultural systems and structures. Thus Myers's approach is attractive within Christian circles, for it hints at and implies notions of conversion, both of the evangelical personal kind and of the more orthodox corporate or social form.

Myers's analysis of the nature (and necessity) of transformational change in relationships and identities, for both the poorer and the richer, in all their types (from self to community and environment, to distant other and to the divine), and across social, economic, political, and all other dimensions, certainly does not make the task of development any easier. In fact, perhaps the easiest critique of Myers's approach is that he seems to make development, particularly authentic or "transformational" development, dependent on deep and personal change in the self-identities of, and relationships between, both richer and poorer. Myers acknowledges that his concept of transformational development does not make the process of development easier, though he would argue, I believe, that it identifies the foundational elements that must be addressed for sustainable, long-term social change. Transformational development is at root a values- and principles-laden process, a slow, thick process of creating change in people, communities, societies, and even humanity. For secularists, the claim that such change is initiated by or depends upon a spiritual relationship with the divine obviously also makes Myers's approach to development appear exclusivist.

Yet Myers is certainly not the only development thinker who emphasizes the importance of transformation, and the language of transformation is not exclusive to Christianity. Another approach to development that adopts this language is articulated by Michael Bopp and Judie Bopp, whose work has focused particularly on indigenous communities in the Americas.[13] They see human well-being (they do not directly define poverty) as being made up of four interrelated dimensions: the physical (physical and economic relations with our material and biophysical environments); the social (human relations with family, community, and nation); the mental (the knowledge and decision-making capacity people hold); and the cultural/spiritual (the ultimate beliefs, values, and life goals of communities and cultures). These dimensions function at four interrelated scales: the personal, family, community, and wider global scales.

Their approach to community development emphasizes the multi-dimensional, complex nature of healthy communities, and identifies over a dozen determin-

13 See Michael Bopp and Judie Bopp, *Recreating the World: A Practical Guide to Building Sustainable Communities* (Calgary, AB: Four Worlds Press, 2011).

ants of community health ranging from basic physical needs, to social and political power, to life-sustaining values, spirituality and a sense of purpose. They call transformation the more "illusive" dimension of social change, but one that has to occur for fundamental change in human systems, "the kind that radically alters the basic relationships people have with each other and with the world in which they live."[14] Simply reorganizing and reshuffling the social and economic order is not sufficient, but rather transformation requires the "dissolution and reorganization of the constituent elements of any system around a new organizing principle, a new pattern of life."[15]

Bopp and Bopp go on to lay out four critical aspects of the dynamics of transformation. Their description is detailed, and I will only discuss the one aspect that is most relevant to my discussion in this chapter, and which I believe is most important.[16] Bopp and Bopp suggest that human transformation begins with change in the "fundamental assumptions about the nature of who we are as human beings, about the purpose and appropriate direction toward which our lives are moving, and about the nature of our relationships with one another, the natural world and with the unknown."[17] They call this the "active information" or the "meta-pattern" of human culture, that "resides in the hearts and minds of people" and is "embedded in their language, their protocols and processes, their activities and goals, and in their relationships with everyone and everything both within and outside the system." This category of information is commonly conceptualized by social scientists "as beliefs, values, mores and behaviour patterns, but we are talking about something that is beneath all of these things, and indeed gives rise to them all."[18] Thus, "this active information can be understood in terms of our vision of who we take ourselves to be, what we see as the limits of our potential, and what we believe about the nature, purpose and appropriate processes of the human systems in which we participate."[19] Strategies for transforming human systems will focus on ways of addressing peoples' deepest vision: changing the grounding "myth" or story by which people live, reframing the emotional or interpretive viewpoint ("frame") that gives meaning, and engaging in open dialogue focused on goal setting and revisioning.[20]

Myers and the Bopps are not unique in arguing that authentic or deep ("transformative") developmental change requires change at the level of relationships and

14 Ibid., 42.

15 Ibid., 42.

16 The other three aspects relate to specific dynamics of human social transformation: the role of critical mass, emerging resonance and interconnection between fields of human "habit," and systems responses to complexity.

17 Ibid., 44.

18 Ibid., 44.

19 Ibid., 45.

20 Ibid., 46.

identities, but at this point it is possible to introduce deeper, more philosophical-anthropological and theological perspectives. Considerable writing in the past three decades, from both Christian and non-Christian traditions, has emphasized that at the root of every "vision for human flourishing" (or well-being) are foundation stories ("myths") or grounding narratives. My own Reformed philosophical tradition has long called these worldviews[21]—basic pre-theoretical and possibly even unarticulated assumptions held by every person about the nature of the world and humanity, and the causes of (and solutions to) brokenness and suffering. Worldviews are not necessarily rational or systematic or cognitive—they are the "visions of the heart," foundational beliefs, commitments and "loves," which are embodied, embraced, and practiced. They are held individually, but also held (and transmitted) collectively through culture. Worldviews have variously been described as meaning structures, subconscious thought patterns, "semiotic systems of narrative signs," presuppositions and cultural assumptions, and competing moral visions which make claims to truth about the world and what it means to be human.

The concept of worldviews is increasingly recognized and used in scholarship beyond philosophy and theology. Two examples can illustrate: an introductory text in environmental studies describes them as "sets of commonly shared values, ideas and images concerning the nature of reality and the role of humanity within it," which are transmitted through culture and shape attitudes and knowledge about nature and everything else.[22] A training manual for peace education grounds the work of peace education and conflict transformation in the rejection of survival- and identity-based worldviews and the adoption of unity-based worldviews.[23]

The analysis that the foundation of authentic development (lasting social

21 The concept of worldview has become quite popular in recent decades in some Christian traditions—for a short introduction, see James H. Olthius, "On Worldviews," *Christian Scholar's Review, 14 no. 2*, (1985), and for a longer, more recent introduction, see David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002). It has also attracted strong critique, both for being too philosophical and cognitive, and for being seen as a determinative and fixed "theory of everything" (resulting in corresponding attempts to define *the* Christian worldview, for example). As I use the term here, worldviews can clearly be not fully examined or fully consistent, partial and changing, and shaped by emotion and sociocultural forces as much as by cognition. See Theodore Plantinga, "David Naugle and the Quest for a Theory of Everything" *Myodicy* 17 (2002) (http://www.plantinga.ca/m/MCD.HTM). Recently, James K. A. Smith, in *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009) has emphasized some of these points, particularly how practice (cultural liturgies) and desire (heart commitments) shape worldviews.

22 Dianne Draper and M. Reed, *Our Environment: A Canadian Perspective,* 4th ed., (Toronto, ON: Nelson, 2009), 36.

23 Sara Clarke-Habibi. "Transforming Worldviews: The Case of Education for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Journal of Transformative Education* 3 no. 1 (2005): 33–56. Clarke-Habibi's analysis of the necessity for transformative learning for attaining lasting peace is similar to my analysis focused on development in this chapter.

change) lies at the deeper level of values, beliefs, identity, and worldviews is not unique to Christian or even religious perspectives. Numerous well-known secular development analysts have made similar arguments. Duncan Green, senior strategic advisor at Oxfam UK, writes that development should not "be framed in desiccated terms such as interest groups, economic growth, institutional evaluation, technological change, while ignoring the central importance of attitudes and beliefs."[24] Similarly, David Korten argues that "the elimination of unjust social structures depends on the emergence of an alternative human consciousness."[25] Michael Edwards, a long-standing advocate of the need to link deep personal change to the pursuit of social justice, argues that the thick interrelated problems facing humanity require major changes in environmental, economic, social, and political aspects of human life, "up to changes in our own identities that a less materialistic worldview demands."[26]

## Transformational Learning

While development thinkers such as Myers and Bopp and Bopp have developed the concept of transformation in relation to (a religiously/spiritually oriented approach to) development, the concept of transformation has also been elaborated as a theory of adult learning in the field of education. Transformative learning theory, developed by Jack Mezirow, has become a dominant theory in the field of adult education.[27] A number of key features of Mezirow's transformative learning theory provide direct parallels to the transformational development theory, and provide supportive understanding and key insights into the process of transformational development.

The key starting point for Mezirow's learning theory is humans' innate need

24 Duncan Green, *From Poverty to Power* (Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing, 2012), 29.

25 David Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century* (Hartford, CN: Kumarian Press, 1990), 168.

26 Michael Edwards, "Thick Problems," 2. Edwards first articulated this idea, together with Gita Sen, in "NGOs, social change and the transformation of human relationships: a 21st century agenda." *Third World Quarterly,* 21 no. 4 (2000): 605–616. He recently has become editor of a new section of the social justice website www.opendemocracy.net named Transformation, which exemplifies his perspective on the relationship between personal and social transformation in its tagline "Where love meets social justice."

27 Mezirow's key publications include Jack Mezirow, "Understanding Transformation Theory," *Adult Education Quarterly* 44 no. 4 (December 1, 1994): 222–232; J. Mezirow, "Contemporary Paradigms of Learning," *Adult Education Quarterly* 46 no. 3 (May 1, 1996): 158–172; J. Mezirow, J. "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 1997.74 (1997): 5–12; J. Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), and more recently, J. Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011). A good secondary source on the development of Mezirow's theory is Andrew Kichenham, "The Evolution of John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory," *Journal of Transformative Education* 6 no. 2 (April 2008): 104–123. The review of transformative learning theory in the following paragraphs is drawn from these sources.

to make meaning of their daily lives. Learning involves interpretation or "making meaning" of experiences and perceptions, in order to guide future understanding and action. Experience and perception are filtered through selective "frames of reference," which Mezirow suggests are composed to two progressively broader dimensions: *meaning schemes* or "points of view," which are specific beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and value judgements by which individuals shape particular interpretations of a thing or event, and *meaning perspectives* or "habits of mind," more foundational and broadly held "abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes."[28] For Mezirow, transformative learning happens when we are confronted with "disorienting dilemmas" that do not fully fit with our existing frames of reference and thus that we cannot fully understand. In order to resolve these dilemmas (if we cannot assimilate the dilemma into existing frames of reference), we need to adopt new foundational frames of reference that can make sense and meaning of these new experiences and/or ideas.

Mezirow accepts the validity of both the objectivist knowledge paradigm, with its focus on empirical inquiry regarding the independent reality of the world, and the more recent constructivist knowledge paradigm, and its concern for socially constructed structures of meaning and the significance of language practices in creating meaning. Thus he follows Habermas's insights to posit there are two distinct domains of learning: instrumental learning and communicative learning. Each has "different purposes, logics of inquiry, and modes of validating beliefs."[29] Instrumental learning, flowing out of the objectivist paradigm, involves learning to control and manipulate the environment or other people, and uses empirical testing to determine truth. Communicative learning, flowing out of the constructivist paradigm, is learning what others mean when they communicate with you, and involves appeals to tradition, values and beliefs, authority or rational discourse to determine justification. Communicative learning is therefore social, and involves dialogue, consensus building, and community-of-practice to arrive at a best judgement.

Mezirow proposes transformative learning as a synthesis of the objectivist and constructivist paradigms. As introduced above, transformative learning occurs when interpretation of (making meaning of) experience (whether of objective or of social "facts") results in a disorienting dilemma that cannot be resolved within existing meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Mezirow argues, following Habermas, that when learners have full information, are not coerced, and are open to examining other perspectives, they will often arrive at new frames of reference about self and the world. These new meaning frames and meaning perspectives are transformative in that they are more open, more inclusive, more discriminating, and more integrative. These meaning perspectives

28 Mezirow, "Transformative Learning," 5–6.

29 Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation,* 8.

do not compartmentalize experience, can integrate and make sense of seemingly conflicting experiences, and provide freedom to act in authentic ways. They thus can lead to increased freedom—greater individual and communal agency and socially responsible action.

The following two linked examples may help to illustrate the key idea of how both instrumental and communicative learning, respectively, can be transformative. When the HIV/AIDS epidemic arrived in developing countries such as Haiti, many Haitians first understood the spread of HIV/AIDS within existing frames of disease, related to spiritual or supernatural forces. Increasingly, such understandings could not empirically explain the spread of the disease and differential success of traditional and pharmaceutical treatments, and more and more people began to adopt a biomedical frame of reference (i.e., HIV/AIDS is caused by a microscopic virus, transmitted by blood and body fluids). This transformed their understanding of HIV/AIDS into a more open, differentiated, and useful frame. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has also been interpreted (constructed) by many people (in both richer and poorer regions of the world) within meaning frames of immorality, stigma, and blame, with corresponding discriminatory and moralistic (and often ineffective) approaches to prevention and treatment. Increasingly, such understandings have not been able to withstand critiques based on humanitarian, human rights, and even faith-based discourses (or understandings) of compassion. As a result, more and more people and organizations have transformed their understandings concerning the "meaning" of HIV/AIDS and adopted more effective approaches focusing on countering stigma, reducing harm, and empowering those affected by the disease. (Yet even this example illustrates the interrelatedness of objective and constructivist learning—the spread of an "empirical" understanding of the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS also involves discursive processes, and the adoption of stigma- and harm-reduction approaches also involves empirical evidence of their increased effectiveness in treatment and prevention.)

The parallels between Mezirow's transformative learning theory and the transformational development approaches of Bryant Myers and Michael Bopp and Judie Bopp is striking. Both provide an understanding of the necessity of "deep" human change in order to address difficult and persistent problems and their underlying causes. Myers locates this deep change at the level of understandings of identities and vocations, Bopp and Bopp describe it at the level of fundamental assumptions about the nature and purpose of all human relationships, while Mezirow conceptualizes it at the level of foundational "frames of reference."[30] While they use somewhat different language, they all can be broadly considered to describe elements of

30 Knut Illeris, in a recent review of transformative learning theory, addresses critiques that Mezirow over-emphasizes that *what* changes in transformative learning are cognitive dimensions of understanding. He suggests that "the concept of transformative learning comprises all learning that implies change in the identity of the learner." Knut Illeris, *Transformative Learning and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2012), 40.

what I have described above as the basic worldviews of people and communities.

These parallels also suggest that the transformation that Myers and Bopp and Bopp describe can be understood as a type of learning. Myers in particular does not elaborate a process by which hoped-for transformation occurs, while Bopp and Bopp propose a broad process of community development will lead to transformation.[31] Mezirow's theory offers a way of understanding this in terms of learning. However, simple additive instrumental learning—the learning of new objective technical knowledge about agriculture and health interventions, or public administration and democratic governance systems —will not necessarily produce transformation of deeper frames and beliefs concerning the meaning and purposes of these domains. Such an approach is based on the transfer models of development. Communicative learning is important, to build the relational, shared knowledge and agreement that participatory and qualitative approaches to development require. But as I have suggested above, for communicative learning to be able to bridge the divides of understanding and relationship requires processes of transformation, which transformational learning theory can help us understand. The deepest challenges of development require change in the meanings, identities, and relationships of poorer and richer people in ways that are more open, discerning and, arguing from a Christian perspective, faithful to the character and call of God's gospel.

## Faithful University Learning in International Development

Thus far, this chapter has argued that "thin" understandings of poverty (as deficit, transfer) and development (as catching up and assimilation into the modern world) are inadequate, and that development that leads to genuine human flourishing requires transformative change in the identities, relationships, and even basic worldviews of both the poorer and the richer. It has also elaborated the parallels between such an understanding of development and transformational learning theory. Learning is transformational when attempts to make meaning of new knowledge and experience produce deep change in basic frames of reference or worldviews, resulting in more open, critically reflective understanding and more engaged, liberating social action. This final section will begin to discuss the implications of these positions for Christian university education—it will suggest ways in which the concepts of transformational development and transformational learning can be used to understand university learning and how international development studies should be learned at a Christian university such as CMU.

First, I would suggest that transformational learning is a useful way to under-

31 Most learning theory focuses on individual learners, and the relationship between individual or personal learning and communal/cultural learning remains an important question that I have not adequately addressed.

stand the task of Christian university education broadly, and not only for the area of international development studies. Transformative learning theory proposes that humans have an innate and even unquenchable longing for establishing meaning and coherence of our experiences in terms of our human identity and vocation. As Fleischer points out, though Mezirow does not "name this search in terms of spirituality, [his] view of the human person is highly compatible with religious anthropologies that see a 'holy longing' at the centre of human existence."[32] Mezirow's theory also proposes that critical reflection (both self- and dialogical reflection) will lead to meaning perspectives that are more open, integrative, and emancipatory in relation to the challenging experiences of human life. While Mezirow conceives of these values in largely humanistic ethical terms (and he seems to presume that careful, critical reflection will usually lead to such better "meaning perspectives" and not less open or less freeing meaning perspectives), they also can be seen as highly compatible with Christian understandings of humanity's call (or creational vocation) to faithful understanding, interpretation, and stewardship of the world.

Fully supporting this claim requires that I enter further into the area of epistemology and hermeneutics (and details of Mezirow's theory) than I am likely qualified to venture. However, a sketch of this justification, drawing on James K. A. Smith,[33] would proceed as follows. Christian knowledge as much as any other system of knowledge is never purely objective or true, in a representational or correspondence sense. Our human creaturehood means that our knowledge will always be shaped by the communities of practice in which this knowledge is used, and will always be contingent. This is not because we believe that the world is arbitrary, that all values are relative, or that the Christian story is not historically true, but because of an awareness of the limits of our creaturehood—our status as created, not creator. To use the language introduced above, human knowing is always (partial because it is) shaped by our commitments and meaning perspectives. Thus learning needs to be a permanent dynamic of examining and adjusting our meaning perspectives to be able to live faithfully in a changing and unfolding creation.

From a Christian (and particularly Anabaptist) perspective, and drawing on Habermas's concept of communicative rationality, faithful, critical, and emancipatory learning will occur if it is conducted within a community of free, open dialogue that is committed to the witness of the Triune God. Thus, drawing on Fleischer again, such critical reflection is seen as transforming earlier "constrain-

32 Barbara J. Fleischer, "Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning and Lonergan's Method in Theology: Resources for Adult Theological Education," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 3 no. 2 (2006): 148.

33 Specifically, James K.A. Smith's *Who's Afraid of Relativism? Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

ing formulations to more compassionate, relational and creative"[34] perspectives that faithfully reflect God's revealing work. Our continual learning ("naming") of the unfolding world, conducted in communal responsibility, could be called our hermeneutic stewardship.

Second, the theory of transformational learning is particularly suited to understanding learning for young adults. Most university students, particularly those who attend CMU, enter as young adults—they come to university during a stage of life when significant maturation and identity formation occurs. Students are at various stages of reconciling adolescent explanations, solutions, and perspectives with increasingly complex and difficult adult experience and reflection. In their university study, they encounter a range of facts, arguments, and theories that may challenge the framing perspectives and worldview assumptions that they have previously assimilated from family, church, and society. Without again entering too far into a specialized field (adult developmental psychology) for which I am not qualified, adult identity formation involves the increasing ability to create distance from what was once embedded in and unrecognized as part of the self. This has been called the subject/object reversal, or the ability to become more critically self-reflexive. More qualitatively complex meaning-making requires that feelings, thoughts, concepts, and relationships become external to us, so that we are able to see them as objects, to name them, reflect upon them, and determine their significance, value, and relationship with other things.[35] Thus, adult development can be described as "learning to look *at* what before we were unknowingly looking *through*."[36] Post-adolescence, most people reach a "socialized" developmental stage where meaning is made in terms of available meaning structures—the norms, values, and beliefs of the social groups in their surrounding social environment. Kegan suggests higher stages of adult development can occur when people increasingly are able to examine relationships, identities, and ideologies as objects of their reflection and meaning-making, and "self-author" their identity and commitments.

University in general can be seen as a time when younger people "become their own selves." For faith-based universities such as CMU, some might see this as a dangerous thing, as critical reflection may weaken childlike faith. Yet the development of mature and discerning faith[37] requires existential testing and self-re-

34 Fleischer, "Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning," 150.

35 Jane Kroger, *Identity in Adolescence: The Balance Between Self and Other*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1996), 147, cited in E.S. Kunnen and Harke A. Bosma, "Development of Meaning Making: A Dynamic Systems Approach," *New Ideas in Psychology* 18 no. 1 (2000): 57–82.

36 Peter W. Pruyn, "An Overview of Constructive Developmental Theory (CDT)," *Developmental Observer* (blog) (http://developmentalobserver.blog.com/2010/06/09/an-overview-of-constructive-developmental-theory-cdt/), accessed May 30, 2015.

37 While granting, following Christian orthodoxy, that faith itself is a gracious gift from God. Christians are none-the-less expected to "grow" or mature in faith through individual and

flection, and a Christian university can provide the support and witness of the long-standing "community of discipleship" that shows how Christian faith can be confessed and practiced in the face of life's disorienting dilemmas. The learning community of a faith-based university is a good place for students to engage in faithful transformational learning.

Third, a Christian university program in international development studies should encourage students to learn and understand an approach to development that adopts both transformative learning theory and faithful transformational development approaches. The parallels between transformative approaches to both learning and development suggest that development should primarily be seen as a learning process that shapes the foundational perspectives and commitments of people and communities in ways that liberate and support human well-being.

The necessity of learning approaches in development programming has long been advocated by those who emphasize the complexity, uncertainty, diversity, and specificity of development problems. Already in the 1980s, David Korten proposed a "learning process approach" as a corrective to prevalent top-down "blueprint" approaches,[38] and Dennis Rondinelli suggested that development programs should be administered as "policy experiments."[39] NGOs have long practiced participatory approaches that attempt to learn with poorer communities about their problems and capacities for change. Today, in response to the continued recognition that many development initiatives have limited impact, there is wide attention being given to issues of complexity, contingency, and emergence, and emphasis on "doing development differently." These approaches emphasize local problem definition and step-wise learning through cycles of incremental planning, action, reflection, and revision, in order for development initiatives to have long-lasting impact.[40] Students studying international development studies eagerly learn these bottom-up, participatory, local knowledge validating approaches to development.

Yet the first sections of this chapter have argued how approaches to development need to go beyond even participatory and empowerment approaches and address foundational issues of ideology, perspective, or worldview to be truly transformational. Many students come to CMU with whole-hearted commitments to the values of participatory and respectful development that is aware of

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communal discipleship.

38 David C. Korten, "Community Organization and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach," *Public Administration Review* 40 no. 5 (1980): 480–511.

39 Dennis Rondinelli, *Development Projects as Policy Experiments: An Adaptive Approach to Development Administration* (New York: Methuen, 1983).

40 Owen Barder, "Development and Complexity." Online lecture based on the May 2012 Kapuściński Development Lecture, http://www.cgdev.org/doc/CGDPresentations/complexity/player.html. Over 400 development thinkers have signed the Doing Development Differently manifesto, http://doingdevelopmentdifferently.com/, accessed May 31, 2015.

the often dominating power of Western knowledge and narratives in the rest of the world. Yet they have much less understanding or learning in how to connect these perspectives with the perspectives of their faith. Similarly, most development approaches, whether they follow mainstream assimilative approaches or community-driven participatory approaches, operate from frames or worldviews that presume a desacralized world and the progressive secularization of the world.

CMU is a community "rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition, moved and transformed by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ."[41] It is committed to promoting learning that calls students and faculty to live out the transforming work of Jesus's good news of love, through the shaping of their most basic presumptions and commitments about humanity and the world. Such a Christian worldview emphasizes the foundational identity of each human as loved by and imaging God, and the primary call of each human to serve with God and fellow humans in an abundant ongoing creation. Such a Christian worldview is a third way—not completely constructivist (implying no essential difference in truth claims between faith traditions) but also not fully objectivist (implying that our understandings are complete and we have nothing to learn).

Thus while Christians believe that a Christian worldview is an authentic rendering of what is essentially true, we also acknowledge that no human fully understands or consistently lives out of these truths. Given our identity as creatures, the diversity and contingency of the world and the limits of our knowing, we acknowledge that no humans own the truth. But as God's image-bearers, humans are capable, creative, and active, and have a responsibility for learning how all humans can live well and flourish. I call this our hermeneutic stewardship.

My proposal of "hermeneutic stewardship" as a broad description of the task of both development studies and university education carries significant traces of my Reformed heritage and worldview, in its echo of a "cultural mandate" sensibility. Yet I have learned (been disoriented, to use Mezirow's language!) by the perspectives and practices of the Anabaptist community during my time at CMU. And I would argue that this concept of careful learning of more faithful understandings and meanings, for it to be fulfilled in a truly responsible manner, requires the insights and praxis of Anabaptism, namely commitments to nonviolence, humility, community, and discipleship. Anabaptist pacifism and service extends to a kind of epistemic humility—it is never convinced that it knows with enough certainty to act strongly and with force. As the Anabaptist theologian Walter Klaassen states, Christians "need to let go of the idea that we build the kingdom … this conceit that it is all in our hands and dependent on us. This is true nonviolence."[42]

The above is very theological and far removed from providing any specific prin-

41 Excerpt from CMU's Mission Statement.

42 Walter Klaassen, "Pacifism, Nonviolence and the Peaceful Reign of God," in Calvin W. Redekop, *Creation and the Environment: An Anabaptist Perspective on a Sustainable World* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 145.

ciples for development that should be learned by international development students at CMU. This is intentional, as the key principle of (faithful) transformation that I have been presenting requires that it be learned in each place and by each community. Good and faithful development is always interpretive or hermeneutic—it always needs to discover or learn what human well-being (good development) means in a particular society. Development is essentially a learning process, but not simply the instrumental learning of what other people already know (as was discussed at the beginning of the chapter). Development is not a universal or standard process, but a creative and human process that can construct shared understandings of how to create healthy food and health-care systems, productive and fulfilling work, and responsive institutions of government and governance. As described earlier, development should be a participatory, empowering learning process. But even development that is constructive or interpretive, for it to also be transformative, should be based on foundational meaning perspectives and commitments that are increasingly discerning and liberating. Christians believe that such discerning and liberating perspectives and commitments are rooted in relationships of responsibility and peaceful service to God, fellow humans, and the creation.

Both international development and university education based on models of deficit and transfer have proven inadequate. A sustainable and just world requires healthy relationships, expressed in and through social, economic, and political structures that can uncover and apply both technical and shared social knowledges (about such fields as food production, health care, and systems of communal and public governance) in diverse communities and cultures. University learning that equips students to work for a world of justice and peace, and the international development efforts in which they hope to serve, requires that people are transformed at the level of meanings, identities, and deepest commitments. A faithful vision of university learning and development learning requires that they be transformational, and witness to the call of God to be in just and peaceful relationships.

# The One Beyond the Many: The Common Purpose and Distributed Nature of Christian Higher Education

*Jonathan M. Sears*

Key to achieving the CMU vision is understanding its *distributed nature*, and building upon the intrinsic opportunities of *each setting*.[1]

## Introduction

In an extended response to the phrase above from the Vision Statement of Canadian Mennonite University, this chapter sets forth some features of CMU's distributed nature in multiple settings as one vision for Christian higher education. CMU's Shaftesbury and Menno Simons College campuses and Outtatown Discipleship School embody "multiple mentoring environments"[2] that Professor Sharon Daloz Parks notes are crucial to foster "critical adult faith."[3] In this chapter, I will rehearse some of my experiences of the opportunities intrinsic in these mentoring environments within the compass of one university: with CMU's Outtatown participants

1 Canadian Mennonite University Vision Statement 2008, 6. Emphasis added.

2 Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Emerging Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass 2000), 159. Cf. Tenth anniversary edition 2011.

3 Executive Leadership Program and School of Theology and Ministry.

as well as students from Shaftesbury and Menno Simons College campuses.[4] These distributed educational settings offer students, faculty, and staff multiple sites in, from, and through which to take seriously convergent and divergent ways to imagine the true, trustworthy, and good, and so to frame comprehensively "what is dependable"[5] and to cultivate a "viable hope."[6]

My reflections on distributed educational settings at CMU centre on good change for just peace, learning for understanding and service, and on the "inner" work of self-knowledge and personal transformation. As we'll see below, the exploration and study of the "whole knower and the whole of life"[7] is embraced by different approaches and worldviews in distributed education.

I discuss Outtatown in terms of trusting God's greatness, Shaftesbury campus in terms of knowing ourselves and our students, and Menno Simons College in terms of how our teaching and learning is rooted in the diverse and particular places, spaces, and communities from which we and our students are drawn. Relying on my understanding of teachings indigenous to the land and place where I teach (Treaty One Territory[8]) as well as heterodox economics, critical pedagogy, and philosophy of science, I propose that whole-knower/person-and-whole-life studies are essentially beyond ready consensus, and by virtue of necessity, they embrace divergent approaches and different worldviews.

Prior to conclusion, I explore how such a multi-paradigm, applied social science might rest on teaching and learning "as if people mattered" (to quote E. F. Schumacher), and how a living understanding of the fullest humanness imaginable remains central to the undergraduate liberal arts and science higher education encompassed by CMU's distributed settings. Further, and particularly in the context of a university "educating for peace and justice,"[9] institutionalized education for service confronts challenging questions about power.

Finally, I take CMU's Vision Statement claim to be a "university of the church for the world,"[10] and draw from this claim foundational questions for the distributed Christian university itself. I end with the idea that multiple expressions of "Christian higher education" are as significant as any particular identity that might

4 At and from each setting, CMU's common purposes are not obviously singular, but rather multiple concerns that share family resemblances, or a "complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, eds., G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), s66.

5 Parks, *Big Questions*, 20.

6 Ibid., 107, 205. See "Radical Dialogue," CMU Mission Statement, http://www.cmu.ca/about.php?s=cmu&p=mission.

7 Coleridge, cited in Parks, *Big Questions*, 162.

8 See below, especially footnotes 36–42.

9 CMU Mission Statement 2008, http://www.cmu.ca/about.php?s=cmu *&p=mission*.

10 Ibid.

be sought, and that the distributed nature of CMU offers one vision of multiple mentoring environments for such teaching and learning.

## Outtatown: Trusting God's Greatness

Working briefly with Outtatowners in pre-departure, following their blog posts, and hearing their stories upon their return, I have learned from them to trust that God is greater than our anxiety or what we fear, or what we are expected to fear. Outtatown intentionally moves participants into unexpected experiences and encounters. Through Outtatown, participants are stretched in their faith formation by the "campus" that stretches across Canada and into three international sites: Guatemala, South Africa, and Burkina Faso. With Outtatown French Africa participants, I teach on West African history and culture, including some regional features of Sunni and Sufi Islam. Teaching pre-departure sessions with the Burkina Faso–bound group in French and English, I witness the learning value of moving outside of our comfort zones.

In my Outtatown teaching, I emphasize cross-cultural factors. Sharing my own experiences of living and working in French West Africa builds a connection with young people with whom I will only spend a few hours in person. Through personal stories and teaching some basic phrases in a local language, Jula, I contrast the real and profound poverty of the region into which Outtatowners go with the also real and rich cultural, historical, and religious resources on which West Africans draw every day. The cultural and religious diversity of West African communities challenges Outtatowners. I endeavour to equip the participants to be open to relationships, and relationship with other languages, perspectives, and possibilities.

To share about Islam from my own Christian perspective, I teach not only some basic Jula greetings and useful phrases (about food, water, washrooms), but also some elaborate benedictions, which are ubiquitous in Jula conversation, even outside of their significance at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. As I characterize Islam as the religion of submission to God's will, sharing about more personal faith-related matters, I find that I shift from French to English. This surprises me anew each time. More than in any other teaching and learning milieu, with Outtatowners I am conscious of helping to equip students for the task of naming new things and experiences, belonging in new ways and new communities, and trusting in abiding and profound truths.[11] Trying to relinquish a posture of certainty, I offer of my own personal experience and partial knowledge. We reflect together about how fasting for Ramadan is like and unlike Lenten observances, how Christian spiritual disciplines are like and unlike five-times-daily prayer on mats on dusty ground, and whether—seemingly fatalistic—submission to an inscrutable divine plan is like or unlike yieldedness to God's purposes in creation.

Among the insistently and explicitly discipleship-focused mentoring environments of Outtatown's many settings, there is a deep and dynamic trust that faithful

11 Parks, *Big Questions*, 34.

Christians are formed in community with other Christians, as well as in relation to other religious traditions and perspectives. Autonomy and interdependence are fostered within different mentoring communities—canoe camping on Shoal Lake;[12] a mosque visit in urban Winnipeg; a Christian worship service in Orodora, rural Burkina Faso; a service opportunity in suburban Paris. In these different sites, students, site leaders, and hosts become profoundly available to "be seen" by each other, and witness to each other's ongoing formation.[13] Outtatowners enter into, and move through and with this diversity as part of being formed in body, relationship, mind, and spirit. In such experiences these young adults combine social, individual, and inner work of meaning-making.

Through encounters with "otherness" they also face dreams and aspirations worthy of their commitment and trust. Done deliberately, this provides occasions for unexpected experiences, encounters, and relationships to "dive into."[14]

## Shaftesbury Campus: Knowing Ourselves and Our Students

In the encounters intrinsic to CMU's Shaftesbury campus, faith formation is fostered in a whole-knower/person-and-whole-life educational experience. Two examples illustrate this. When Foothills Mennonite Church (Calgary) Senior Pastor Doug Klassen was Pastor-In-Residence at Shaftesbury campus, I was teaching a unit on "Men and Masculinities" in a Gender and Politics course. Thanks to the conversations that Klassen led,[15] students connected the chapel sharing with class materials. Students recognized the mass media images of men that feature in contemporary popular culture. Doug identified the overweight bumbling buffoon (Homer Simpson) and the over-muscled fighter/warrior (Arnold Schwarzenegger). Other images of contemporary masculinity, however, also concerned the class.

Among these was the character Ryan Bingham, played by American actor George Clooney in the 2009 film *Up in the Air*. Bingham is a handsome, highly successful professional. He flies 350,000 miles a year, trades on his elite status, lives out of a suitcase, and fires people on behalf of their employers. This "transnational business masculinity"[16] values egocentrism, conditional loyalties, and a diminished sense of responsibility to others, as well as hedonism, individualism, and competition. In this image of male success in contemporary culture, "moving is living," as Bingham says: "your relationships are the heaviest components in your life [ … ] we weigh ourselves

12 See below, footnote 42, "Shoalidarity."

13 Parks, *Big Questions*, 128.

14 A theme phrase shared at the Outtatown graduation service ceremony, December 7, 2014, Canadian Mennonite University, Great Hall, Shaftestbury Campus, Winnipeg.

15 Similar issues are highlighted in Doug Klassen, "Shifting Male Roles," *Canadian Mennonite* 16 no. 11 (May 28, 2012).

16 R. W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 226, cited in Victoria Robinson, "Men, Masculinities and Feminism," in Victoria Robinson and Diane Richardson eds., *Introducing Gender & Women's Studies,* 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 59.

down until we can't even move. Make no mistake: moving is living."[17] Bingham has wealth, status, and career competence; these he gains without lasting relationships.

In chapel, Klassen pointed to multiple biblical examples of ways to "be a man." In my class, we considered whether and how Paul or David or Elijah modelled gender roles alternative to mainstream professional or conventional business success. A key issue we wrestled with was how or to what degree biblical examples of masculinity represented committed partnerships or full-time paid employment. Students therefore struggled to see these models as feasible alternatives for their lives. Such counter-cultural pursuit of concretely relevant models of whole-life faithful discipleship are material, relational, and spiritual.

Another occasion of a classroom-based wholeness education was in a Global Politics course. After a class session on critical international relations theory, a student said to me, "I'm not a pacifist. My tradition—Christian Reformed—has a just war theology." The student seemed worried that this perspective might not fit into the overall tenor of the course, given the larger context for the course at the university "educating for peace and justice."[18] The student's statement invited me to reassure the student that their question fit into the class and course, and to meet the student—and then the class as a whole—from my own faith tradition. Anglicanism also encompasses a "just war" theology. As a political scientist, not a theologian nor a biblical scholar, I stressed how *jus bella* rests on an understanding of the kind of sovereignty that a state has, distinct from but nevertheless in the context of the sovereignty of Jesus as Lord.[19]

The student's forthrightness recast for me and for the class the place and problem of violence (direct, indirect) in relationships around the world. Such interdenominational dialogue continues to enrich the Anglican Communion (and other non-Mennonite traditions) who are turning to peace-church thinking and practice to revisit their own understandings and practices.[20] The opportunity to be questioned and refined from "outsider" perspectives is precisely what a diversity of mentors and mentoring environments provides. For me, this encounter also affirmed the crucial place in teaching and learning of ongoing and dynamic self-knowledge.

As educator, writer, and activist Parker Palmer makes clear in *The Courage to Teach* (1997/2007), the emerging selfhood of teachers in relationship with the emerging selfhood of students is part of the grace and beauty of learning encounters. If we teach from whom we are becoming in relation to whom the students

17 "*Up in the Air,* 2009: Quotes," *Internet Movie Database,* http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1193138/quotes.

18 CMU Mission Statement, http://www.cmu.ca/about.php?s=cmu&p =*mission*.

19 E. J. Bicknell (rev. by H. J. Carpenter), *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England* (London: Lonman, Green & Co., 1957); William Temple, *Citizen and Churchman* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1941).

20 E.g., Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2010).

are becoming, then the "inner" work of self-knowledge, meditation, and prayer is never an extra, but an essential component of living into a life of learning.[21] Taking seriously this inner work in community is part of "making meaning,"[22] centred on an ethics of building trust in what is trustworthy. What is most trusted and prized is, as both Palmer and Parks stress, at the heart (French, *coeur*, *courage*) of what we believe in, that which is to us beloved (German, *belieben*). Through a comprehensive framing of what is trustworthy, then, we are "composing and being composed by meaning."[23]

Here is the most foundationally important contribution of *distributed* Christian higher education. Multiple settings offer not a simplistic pluralism of possible things in which to trust or to love, but rather pose the question in terms of where lies the centre of the heart of value and loyalty-love, and how multiple meanings might be encompassed by one trust and truth, to ground being and becoming, action and virtue.[24] Indeed, American theologian H. Richard Niebuhr points to this encompassing as he distinguishes between partial loyalties to many foci, or "lesser gods" and devotion to one "god" among many, on the one hand, and "radical monotheism" on the other hand.[25] Such a pattern of meaning-making centres on the "one beyond the many" that embraces the many and that remains "adequate to all of the ongoing conditions of the experiences of persons and their communities."[26]

The "one beyond the many" helps me make sense of a framed quote from Menno Simons that hangs on the wall outside my office in the hall:

> True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute and it serves those who harm it. It binds up that which is wounded. *It has become all things to all people.*[27]

It has been the concluding sentence, that true faith or true knowledge can be-

21 Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, 2007), 195.

22 Parks, *Big Questions*, 14, 17.

23 Ibid., 20.

24 Ibid., 22–23.

25 Polytheism and henotheism. H. R. Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1943), 25, cited in Parks, *Big Questions*, 23.

26 Ibid., 23.

27 Menno Simons, 1539. "Why I Do Not Cease Teaching and Writing," *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, Leonard Verduin, trans., J. C. Wenger, ed. (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 307. http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2012/01/15/anabaptist-nation-true-evangelical-faith/. Emphasis added. On this phrase, the manuscript tradition from Simons's original Frisian language is not as unequivocal as might be hoped. Nevertheless, this translation is the English standard. Thanks to Professor of History and Theology Dr. Karl Koop, CMU.

come all things to all people, which has most challenged me since I started working at CMU. I resist tendencies toward a singular, definitive expression of "true good news faith" as a seeming totalizing narrative:[28] the *one* truth for *every* experience of *every* population. More fully, the meaning of Simons's "all things" encompasses *many* elements of what constitutes any good news that meaningfully "shall be for all people" (Luke 2:10) and embraces "whosoever" (John 11:26) seeks to encounter God.[29]

For Christian higher education to track the reality of the one beyond the many demands a robust account and embodiment of the many. To navigate life in the world with our students, then, is to venture into many world*s:* multiple, and possibly divergent ways of knowing and being. As Palmer makes clear, the (ad)venture of teaching, learning, and formation entails "holding the tension of opposites."[30] With apparent dichotomies—of deconstructive, critical thinking and integrative, transformative practice—social sciences and humanities also live with(in) paradoxical "both–and" perspectives. Environmentalist, entrepreneur, and author Paul Hawken declares to contemporary agents of change, including practitioners, scholars, and students of good change and just peace:

> "If you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand the data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse."[31]

Living with the contradictions or living into paradoxes preserves the tension between understanding or interpreting the world and changing it. Rather than forcing resolution of such paradoxes, we can affirm both the reality of "what is [ … ] the hardness and the darkness of it" as well as "what we know to be possible because we've seen examples of it [ … ] a world at peace [ … ] sharing of abundance [ … ] forgiveness and kindness."[32] The task, then, is "to stand in this place between

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28 Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Science: A Contemporary Introduction* (East Sussex, UK, Psychology Press, 2005), 177, 183.

29 At the Mennonite Higher Education Faculty Conference (August 1–3, 2012 at Goshen College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) Regina Shands Stoltzfus, Assistant Professor of Peace, Justice, & Conflict Studies at Goshen, made this point eloquently from John's text. Christian higher education must seek to embrace "team whosoever (trusts in me)"; diversity is thus not a choice, but a gift and responsibility of faithful living.

30 Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 89.

31 Paul Hawken, "Healing or Stealing?" Commencement Address, University of Portland, Portland, OR, 2009, http://www.up.edu/commencement/default.aspx?cid=9456. Hawken continues, "What I see everywhere in the world are ordinary people willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world."

32 Parker Palmer, "Tragic Gap" [video], CourageRenewal, March 3, 2009, http://youtu.be/rq0aeKCB41g.

what is and what could and should be" without being drawn into "too much reality" and "corrosive cynicism" on the one hand, nor falling into "irrelevant idealism" on the other.[33] Remaining wholly engaged as individuals in communities is central to holding onto the living paradoxes. Moreover, the necessary and significant "inner work"—meditation, prayer, self-searching, the examined life—entails "practicing the powers that open the heart, open the mind, that invite the soul into being."[34] Goshen College history professor John D. Roth emphasizes precisely these soul-practices in his account of the "invisible curriculum" of Anabaptist-Mennonite education: careful curiosity, humility in understanding, joy and surprise, patience, and love in teaching and learning relationships.[35]

## Menno Simons College: Rooting Our Teaching and Learning in Its Places

"Inner work" to cultivate curiosity, joy, and humility is not only the province of prayer and worship, informed by biblical and theological study, and spiritual disciplines. Menno Simons College (MSC) is CMU's campus affiliated with the public University of Winnipeg. Although sometimes identified as part of the secular humanist educational tradition of liberal arts and science, the University of Winnipeg is becoming an increasingly and explicitly "indigenous-centred institution" (alongside the ethnocultural diversity of newcomers in the urban core), and articulating this with its Presbyterian-Methodist roots as United College. Today, University of Winnipeg events regularly begin with prayer and ceremony acknowledging the gift of the land by the Creator, and the Treaty One covenant relationship that settlers and newcomers have with people of the land on which Winnipeg sits.

As I learn more about the teachings from the people of the land where I live and work, I endeavour to engage students with Anishinaabe *mino bimaadiziwin* ("way of a good life") teachings. To be fully human (physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually) is always understood in relationship to stewarding Creation and honouring the Creator.[36] Beyond learning with our neighbours about the renaissance of indigenous teachings and through activism for lasting

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 John D. Roth, *Teaching That Transforms* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010), 25, 111–122. *Pace* Roth, however, my emphasis here is not on the singularity of Anabaptist–Mennonite expressions—Roth's language is persistently singular throughout: identity, character, tradition, vision. Rather, the multiplicity embraced by Christian higher education is foundational to such a curriculum.

36 D'Arcy Ishpemingenzaabid (He-who-sees-from-a-high-place) Rheault, *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin The Way of a Good Life* (Peterborough, Ontario: Debwewin Press, 1999), 23, 69; Brian Rice, *A Four-Directional Perspective on Human and Non-human Values, Cultures and Relationships on Turtle Island* (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2005).

justice within covenant relations, settlers—whether first or seventh generation—also learn from being rooted in the land. Whether by working the land as gardeners or farmers, or by investing places with meaning, we begin bringing "the land" back into our lives, relationships, economies, and into the liberal arts and sciences. Thus we might move beyond a Eurocentric social science, founded on abstraction, a "deeply entrenched habit of mind [ … ] by which theory in the social sciences is admired exactly in the degree to which it escapes specific settings and speaks in abstract universals."[37] Against such "deterritorialization" Australian sociologist Raewyn W. Connell persuasively insists "the general idea of dispossession—one of the most important and under-theorised concepts in social science—needs to sink roots in the mud of particular landscapes."[38] Such "dirty" (or "muddy-boots" or "rooted") theory recenters indigenous, traditional, and faith-based knowledges and pedagogies, in which "the land" names relationships among all that lives.[39]

The persistence of "space-ness" manifest as land struggles or through transformative action in cities around the world underscores that "[t]he land, therefore, is not irrelevant, even in the citadels of globalisation."[40] Indeed, "[w]e have to understand its [the land's] social significance in a complex dialectic of place and power, of which the history of colonisation and the consequent land rights struggles of indigenous people are key parts. These struggles, the experiences that underlie them and the arguments advanced in them are now strategic matters of social justice globally."[41]

Albeit with different contours in different places, land is nevertheless an issue for indigenous and settler communities alike.[42] Highlighting the relevance of contemporary "land-grabbing" in southern Saskatchewan where she farms or-

37 R. W. Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 206.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., 209. Cf., e.g., Transition Movement, http://www.transitionnet *work.org*; Rob Hopkins, *The Power of Just Doing Stuff: How Local Action Can Change the World* (Cambridge, UK: UIT Cambridge Ltd., 2013); Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy,* 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2012).

41 Ibid.

42 MSC IDS (and UW Global College) alumna "Christie McLeod boils water in solidarity with people in Shoal Lake," CBC news online Feb 03, 2015, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-woman-continues-to-boil-her-water-in-shoalidarity-1.2943038.
At MSC in 2012, International Development Studies Instructor Kenton Lobe supported his Participatory Local Development students' desire to think themselves into the implications of their "identity as settlers on Indigenous land." In a class-wide project they researched and documented, not how they might act on behalf of others or even to serve others, but rather how they might be changed to live differently. Living Decolonization 2012; https://livingdecolonization.wordpress.com.

ganically, Professor Nettie Wiebe points to the ecological destruction and profound distrust that is undermining and destroying communities in the worldwide land investment boom.[43] Re-centred in inter-worldview dialogue and inquiry, the land demands to be understood other than as merely a commodity.

Thus is required a language of humility and of that-which-is-greater-than-oneself for an approach to seeking to become "change agents" and to "make a difference" (MSC's recruitment tagline).[44] Seen from my place at MSC, teaching, learning, and forming change agents, we engage the full, complex, and even contradictory implications of the Gandhian encouragement to be changed ourselves as we would see the world changed.[45] Vocabularies of self-awareness and self-overcoming are thus part of a "search to identify what is held as sacred and therefore worthy of devotion or commitment."[46] Crucial to stress, however, is that vocabularies of the sacred cannot be simply assumed or asserted, but rather, they may be carefully cultivated and nurtured through "encounters between multiple and divergent modernities"[47] and their worldviews: ones based on analytically separating body and mind, and on eschewing or denying spirituality, as well as ones that articulate holism, and maintain places, spaces, and possibilities for the transcendent and the sacred.

Thus "the sacred" is posed as a question, in a trusting posture of humility and openness, rather than stated as fact. Priest, author, and professor Henri Nouwen acknowledges the significant challenge of what is at stake in the Epilogue to *The Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*. "My attempt had been to be a 'witness of God's love' to a secular world, but I have sounded like someone who is so excited about the art of sailing that he forgets that his listeners have never seen lakes or the sea, not to mention sailboats!"[48] Having tried to "speak a word of hope to people who no longer came to churches or synagogues and for whom priests and rabbis were no longer the obvious counselors," Nouwen concludes that the "issue is whether there is anything in our world that we can call

43 "'This Land Is Our Land? Re-integrating Earth, Eating, and Ethics," Esau Distinguished Lecture, Canadian Mennonite University at Menno Simons College, Eckhart-Grammaté Hall, University of Winnipeg, January 23, 2014. See video at http://youtu.be/KdGxKvE4XTw.

44 MSC Homepage, http://mscollege.ca/.

45 Metta Centre for Nonviolence Education, *Did Gandhi Ever Say?* http://www.mettacenter.org/nv/nonviolence/faq.

46 Liesa Stamm, "The Dynamics of Spirituality and the Religious Experience," in Arthur W. Chickering, Jon C. Dalton, and Liesa Stamm, *Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), 47.

47 Andrew E.. Barshay, "The Sciences of Modernity in a Disparate World," *The Cambridge History of Science*, 405–412, eds. Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross, 1st ed., vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 409.

48 H. Nouwen, *The Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (Hertford, NC: Crossroad, 1992), 144.

'sacred' [ … ] that has the inner quality of sacredness, of being holy, worthy of adoration and worship."[49] Such "big enough questions" (as Parks says) draw out our commitment to profess what is worthy.[50]

Whether from critical pedagogy (e.g., Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire) that rejects "a dichotomy between human beings and the world,"[51] or from the epistemological humility of indigenous methodology and pedagogy that "walks around the truth of sacred things,"[52] a profound (radical, respectful) and engaged dialogue across multiple worldviews foregrounds both science and story in meaning-making. Teachers' and students' own narratives of being whole or less-than-whole impact what we know, what we do, who we are, and where we belong. When we take seriously different tellings, or retellings, writings and rewritings of lived experience and the associated ways of knowing —whether based in faith or cultural traditions—these may be seen not as antithetical, but rather complementary to traditions of empirical science. When used to talk about the truth of great or sacred things, such complementarity can deepen belief, even as it shows that human knowledge about anything is inevitably partial. Great things can be known and honoured deeply; no one person or perspective grasps the whole truth of great things. Thus, like a mountain, truth must be seen in every direction and from every direction in order to be properly understood. This multidirectional thinking is thus most clearly expressed not as the *possession* of truth, but as a journey around, alongside, and with the truth and its servants. To ask what counts as knowledge in appreciative and open ways, while taking seriously respectful interface among worldviews,[53] encompasses human-

49 Ibid., 145.

50 Parks, *Big Questions*, 165–168.

51 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1983, [1970]), 75.

52 The Rt. Rev. Mark Macdonald. "A Statement to Lambeth from The Anglican Indigenous Peoples Network," *First Peoples Theology Journal* 1 no.1 (July 2000).

53 See Richard A. Yoder, Calvin W. Redekop, and Vernon E. Jantzi, *Development to a Different Drummer: Anabaptist/Mennonite Experiences and Perspectives* (Good Books, 2004); Willie Ermine, "The Ethical Space of Engagement," *Indigenous Law Journal,* 6, no. 1 (2007); Harry Huebner and Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen, eds., *On Being Human: Essays from the Fifth Shi'i Muslim Mennonite Christian Dialogue* (Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2013). See also "Creation and Other Stories," *First Peoples Theology Journal* 2 no.1 (Sept. 2001); "Remembrance, Recognition, Reclamation, Reconciliation," *First Peoples Theology Journal* Special issue (2010); Government of Canada 1996, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples,* Volume 1 - Looking Forward Looking Back. PART THREE Building the Foundation of a Renewed Relationship, Chapter 15 - Rekindling the Fire, Sec. 6, The Land That Supports Us, http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211051353/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg53_e.html, Christian Artuso, "noogom gna-izlzi-anisltinaabemonaaniwag: Generational Differences in Algonquin" (Master's Thesis). Department of Linguistics, University of Manitoba, 1998. *Chi Miigwetch* to Dr. Artuso for his time and patience in explaining this to a non-specialist.

ism, non-Western learning ethics, and faith formation in light of how we come to understand why we believe the things we believe are real, possible, desirable, and necessary.

To show the type of inter-worldview dialogue that occurs where I mainly teach at MSC, two accounts of wealth and labour illustrate what English economist E. F. Schumacher called "meta-economic" questions. Related to knowledge pursued by empirical economic inquiry, Schumacher contrasts two "economics," by contrasting two views of human labour:

> There is universal agreement that a fundamental source of wealth is human labour. Now, the modern economist has been brought up to consider "labour" or work as little more than a necessary evil. [ … ] Hence the ideal from the point of view of the employer is to have output without employees, and the ideal from the point of view of the employee is to have income without employment. [ … ] The Buddhist point of view takes the function of work to be at least threefold: to give man [sic] a chance to utilise and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his ego-centredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence.[54]

It is has been noted, and admitted by Schumacher himself, that the chapter "Buddhist Economics" could also have been called "Christian Economics."[55] Humans' wealth and well-being concerns are thus set against a backdrop of awareness and concern with the transcendent and sacred. The key contrast is between orthodox economic rationality that maximizes wealth and consumption, and one that maximizes happiness and well-being with minimum wealth and consumption.[56] More telling, however, is how "a study of economics as if people mattered" (the subtitle of *Small is Beautiful*) opens economics to multiple meanings—along the axes of "empirical–normative" concerns (including an "is–ought" spectrum) as well as what might be called "modern–traditional" concerns (including what counts as "knowledge" and for whom).[57]

Considering my area of international development studies, these epistemo-

54 E.F Schumacher, "Buddhist Economics" in *Small Is Beautiful* (London, UK: Sphere Books, 1973), 44–45.

55 Charles Fager, "Small Is Beautiful, and So Is Rome: The Surprising Faith of E. F. Schumacher," *Christian Century* 94 (April 1977): 325–326.

56 This is framed around "voluntary simplicity" thinking and practice. Q.v. Mark Burch, *Stepping Lightly: Simplicity for People and the Planet* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers), 2011.

57 "Traditional" here suggests critical assessment of claims made for secular modernity. Space limits discussion. However, it is clear that multi-paradigm approaches are concerned with issues that are other-than-entirely-secular ("of the present age"). Ways of knowing the other-than-mundane are challenging and germane to the contemporary social science of globalizing modernity; this is increasingly recognized, e.g., Sévernine Deneulin and Masooda Bano, *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* (New York: Zed Books, 2009).

logical issues are recognized as significant for scholars also,[58] given that debates in the social sciences more generally are "not strictly resolvable by empirical research findings."[59] Such "[a]rguments between Marxists and functionalists, or between liberals and communitarians, or between advocates of neoclassical economic theory and analysts of transaction costs" rest more or less explicitly on "background assumptions about how the world actually works," on orientations that "shape not only the interpretation of data, but the direction and methodologies of research."[60] Such epistemological and methodological issues rest precisely on multiple orientations. Many meanings—even of what counts as evidence—are part of what we might call, with philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn, the "pre-paradigmatic" character of social science and humanities disciplines, which lack consensus on "procedures, theories, even metaphysical presuppositions."[61] Notably, paradigm-talk frames the problem thus: "proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in *different worlds*."[62]

Rather than bemoaning whole-knower/person-and-whole-life studies as "pre-paradigmatic" and needing to be "fixed," however, this educational framework remains essentially *multi*-paradigmatic, embracing divergent approaches in and to different worlds. Through deliberate constitutive diversity in multiple settings students, faculty, and staff can enter "radical dialogue" with different worldviews, and take them seriously at their very roots.[63] Just as university learners are at or straddling different stages or moments of faith development, they are also in nested or layered "moral worlds,"[64] including personal/family relation-

58 See exchanges on the listserv of the Canadian Association for Studies in International Development (CASID) re: "Essential Readings in International Development Theory and Practice, " 2012. CASID Archives–June 2012. Particularly insightful are the comments by Peter Tamas Fri, 22 June 2012. Available from http://lists.mcgill.ca/scripts/wa.exe?A1=ind1206b&L=casid&*D=0&H=0&O=T&T=0* [accessed 25 July 2012].

59 "Theory," 480–482. In Craig Calhoun, ed., *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

60 Ibid.

61 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970); cited in Alexander Bird, "Thomas Kuhn," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta, ed. (Fall 2013).

62 Kuhn, cited in Bird, "Thomas Kuhn," emphasis added. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, 1988: "Whereas the natural and the cultural or hermeneutic sciences are capable of living in mutually indifferent, albeit more hostile than peaceful coexistence, *the social sciences must bear the tension of divergent approaches under one roof*," *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, S. W. Nicholsen and J. A. Stark, trans. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 3, emphasis added. Cited in James Bohman and William Rehg, "Jürgen Habermas," Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011).

63 CMU Vision Statement 2008, http://www.cmu.ca/about.php?s=cmu *&p=mission*.

64 Jon C. Dalton, "Integrating Spirit and Community in Higher Education," in Arthur W. Chickering, Jon C. Dalton, and Liesa Stamm, *Encouraging Authenticity and Spirituality in Higher*

ships, campus life, and community engagements from local to global. Given students' dynamic experiences between multiple moral, worldview, and epistemological worlds, Christian higher education can "accept and engage the diversity of faith orientation sensitively and helpfully."[65]

## Glory and Power: Irenaus and Illich

As we have seen, loosely common, "family resemblance" concerns of Christian undergraduate liberal arts and science higher education are evident in the intentionally multiple teaching and learning environments that constitute CMU's Shaftesbury and MSC campuses, and Outtatown Discipleship School. These concerns centre on fuller humanness in the sense suggested by Irenaeus of Lyon that "God's glory is a living person" (*Gloria Dei est vivens homo*).[66]

With whole-knower/person-and-whole-life studies at its core and with a strong ethic of helping and service to seek just peace, Christian higher education also frames a central paradox about power. To seek to gain power in order to serve and help also raises the corresponding issue of how and when (or if) to refuse or relinquish said power. Indeed, to relinquish power deliberately aims to transform relationships between "uppers" and "lowers" in local communities and in the global links of international exchange and cooperation. This perspective questions not only the instrumentalized, managerial relations in national and international bureaucracies and markets of industrial modernity, but also of the knowledge and science on which such relationships are premised. Relinquishing or holding loosely the power to do "good" (concurrent with recognizing the limits of said power) is part of responsible well-being, and rests on commensurate humility in the power to know.[67]

Social critic Monsignor Ivan Illich's bold call is "to renounce integration in the 'system'"—whether bureaucratic, commercial, educational, service-oriented or development-focused—to "voluntarily renounce exercising the power" of

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*Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass : San Francisco, 2006), 173.

65 Liesa Stamm, "The Dynamics of Spirituality and the Religious Experience," in Chickering, *Encouraging Authenticity*, 64.

66 Irenaeus, "Adversus Haereses," in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, 1885, reprint (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 315–567. Without parsing the debates on interpretations of this celebrated quote, "Saint Irenaeus goes on to say, 'the life of a man is the vision of God.' So the context reveals that 'living man' or 'man fully alive' is in actuality rooted in the beatific vision, that is, Heaven. [ … ] From a Thomistic point of view, there is an analogy between the life of glory in Heaven and the life of grace on earth." Taylor Marshal, "The Glory of God is Man Fully Alive—Did St Irenaeus Really Say This?" http://taylormarshall.com/2013/04/the-glory-of-god-is-man-fully-alive-did.html.

67 Robert Chambers, "For Our Future, Responsible Well-being: A Persona Agenda for Development," *Ideas for Development* (London: Earthscan, 2007), 184–220.

wealth, education, and position.[68] Transformational practice for good change and just peace on Illich's terms would mean not only epistemological humility and self-reflexive critique of privileged power and knowledge, but also "to freely, consciously and humbly give up [ … ] imposing your benevolence" and "to recognize your inability, your powerlessness and your incapacity to do the 'good' which you intended to do."[69] Illich's stark exhortation to powerlessness as Christian witness and discipleship rests in part on his exegesis of Luke 4, where the *diabolos* ("divider") offers Jesus power. Instead of contradicting the devil's claim to hold and distribute all power, "by his silence Jesus recognizes power that is established as 'devil' and defines Himself as The Powerless."[70]

Illich draws discomfiting conclusions for the "helping institutions" and the communities who found and sustain them. Whoever "cannot accept this view on power cannot look at establishments through the spectacle of the Gospel. This is what clergy and churches often have difficulty doing. They are so strongly motivated by the image of church as a 'helping institution' that they are constantly motivated to hold power, share in it or, at least, influence it."[71]

## Conclusion: A University of the Church for the World?

68 Ivan Illich, "To Hell with Good Intentions," address to the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, April 20, 1968. Also central to thinking about this differently is to hold more loosely the posture of "host" central to Christian hospitality and charitability, and to explore instead being *hosted* by "others" (See "Generous Hospitality … Radical Dialogue," CMU Mission Statement, http://www.cmu.ca */about.php?s=cmu&p=mission*). At the Mennonite Higher Education Faculty Conference (August 1–3, 2012, at Goshen College and AMBS) Dr. Rebecca Hernandez, Associate Vice President Intercultural Engagement and Faculty Development at George Fox University, made this point eloquently by emphasizing how and why "hosts" can retain power that they should instead yield by being hosted. Dr. John Swinton makes a similar point about profoundly disabled people hosting rather than being hosted by nondisabled persons. "Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefulness and Gentle Discipleship," J. J. Thiessen Lectures, Canadian Mennonite University, October 14–15, 2014.

69 Illich, "To Hell with Good Intentions."

70 Illich, "The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel," (Chicago November 13, 1988), http://www.davidtinapple.com/illich/1988_Educa-tional .html.

71 Ibid. Distributed educational settings are not immune to the shortcoming of institutionalization: where the authority to teach or power to help, can remain "elegant" in its exercise, which German professor and author Marianne Gronemeyer describes as "unrecognizable, concealed, supremely inconspicuous"; see "Helping," in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge and Power*, Wolfgang Sachs, ed. (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1992, 53–69, 53). Moreover, the posture of doing-for-others that assumes that they cannot do for themselves risks elevating the servant over the served, and concealing rather than illuminating paradoxes of obligations and entitlements to help, or of altruistic and self-regarding motivations to serve; (Barbara Heron, *Desire for development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 15.

A "university of the church for the world,"[72] then, faces some paradoxical realities, particularly as these are manifest across its multiple sites and institutional forms. To renounce integration into "systems" also demands critiquing, revising, and possibly rejecting the knowledge system(s) on which such privileged power and integration is based. Moreover, to serve the church in the world, distributed Christian higher education profits from multiple sites, as well as some less institutionalized expert-led encounters, and enables more relational forms of teaching and learning. To foster the study and pursuit of good change and just peace is to cultivate critical self-awareness toward relinquishing ostensible expertise and truth *possession* about the ends and means of responsible well-being. Such "pedagogy of the non-oppressed"[73] enables even as it requires humble reflection about who or what is "the church," of which the university *is,* and who or what is "the world" that such a university is *for*. To query "the church" as it also interrogates "the world" is necessarily to ask what/who/where is this "church," and where do we encounter "the world."

Moreover, to emphasize faith-formed scholars' "public mandate to think carefully and systematically about all of life" is to acknowledge that "the assumptions and traditions of society, the faith and traditions of the church, as well as the customs and 'givens' of the university must be put under the microscope."[74] In "developing creative and practical models or structures," distributed educational settings "generate the kind of conversation needed in order for the advancement of knowledge to be a truly communal process."[75] In dialogue with the larger communities of the world*s* in "the world," faith-formed scholars, teachers, and students can keep teaching and learning how to be changed, ultimately to welcome having less wealth and power. The communit*ies* are intentionally multiple in which distributed Christian higher education undertakes its work, "as the church discerns how to be faithful in an increasingly secular context."[76]

While different settings share a collection of traits among them that point to (and serve) the university's mission and vision, not every trait is manifest in every setting, nor manifest entirely or identically in any setting. Thus, we are able and required to ask about the family resemblances among multiple expressions that are as significant as any particular identity: the many "we" who are part of the larger collaborative formation and education project, whose purpose is undeniably held "in

72 CMU Vision Statement 2008.

73 Robert Chambers, *Ideas for Development* (London: Earthscan, 2005), 195.

74 Gerald Gerbrandt, "Scholars as Servants of the Church," *Direction* 33 no. 2 (2004): 136, http://www.directionjournal.org/33/2/scholars-as-servants-of-church.html.

75 Ibid., 139.

76 Ibid., 142. This distinction between "the church" and "the secular" can be more carefully scrutinized across the multiple sites of distributed Christian higher education where the secularist thesis is, on the one hand, deeply entrenched and seemingly beyond interrogation (e.g., public university campuses), and, on the other hand, ideally situated to be challenged.

common"—but loosely so. Multi-paradigmatism in empirical science and normative inquiry cultivates gifts and skills to seek just peace and the responsible well-being of fully human flourishing, while also reconsidering, even relinquishing, the expertise, powers, and entitlements to do so. Precisely because of the multiple contexts in which a distributed model of Christian higher education operates, the assumptions and traditions (of "society," "faith," "church," and "university") under investigation are all plural in form. Multiple encounters in multiple mentoring environments of both doing and being are at the heart of this enterprise: to teach and learn with students who are studying, living, and working not only to make a difference, but also to be, differently.

# Biology as a Liberal Art

*John Brubacher*

## Introduction

In his 1975 book, *The Idea of a Christian College*, the late Arthur Holmes (former chair of the philosophy department at Wheaton College) describes an interaction with a student who asked what use his education would have in "real life."[1] After some reflection, Holmes concluded that this was the wrong question; rather than asking about an education, "What can I do with it?" we should ask instead, "What is it doing to me—as a person?" In other words, a liberal arts education ought to be about the *formation of people*. More particularly, in the *Christian* liberal arts context, it ought to be about forming people who have reflected on what it means to be made in the image of God. This objective establishes that the liberal arts are neither a form of technical training, nor merely learning a broad range of topics (though of course a liberal arts education ought to include both technical skills and breadth). Holmes further suggests that like his student visitor, educators also need to ask, "What sort of men and women will [my students] become by wrestling with the material in the way I present it?"[2]

Biology, being a "STEM" discipline (science, technology, engineering and math), is part of a set of subjects that governments of the day frequently remind us are critical to our nations' economic success in a future that is assumed will be

1 Arthur Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 31.

2 Ibid., 32.

driven by science and technology.[3] It may well be that STEM disciplines are critical to the future economy, but unfortunately, the prevalence of this sort of thinking predisposes us to view the potential of sciences too narrowly in terms of their applications, rather than first and foremost as integral to liberal arts education—indispensable components of the quest to wrestle with big questions about meaning and human purpose. Thus the sciences are granted importance, but only for instrumental purposes, which ignores their artistic, humanistic, and even spiritual dimensions. Perhaps because this instrumental rationale has been reasonably effective in securing funding for STEM fields, it has also been adopted by advocates of the arts and humanities.[4] As such, it seems to me, we are losing the capacity to speak about post-secondary education in any way other than whatever happens to be politically expedient at the moment.

Certainly, biology has practical applications, especially in medicine, industry, and agriculture. But in this essay, my intention is to reflect on biology as a liberal art—to ask Holmes's question about the transformative aspect of education: what sort of men and women might our students become by wrestling with biology in a Christian university context? I do not mean to deny the importance of practical utility, but rather to acknowledge and explore some of the life-altering lessons that students stand to learn from studying biology in an educational context

3 For example: "President Obama believes that reaffirming and strengthening America's role as the world's engine of scientific discovery and technological innovation is essential to meeting the challenges of this century. *A growing number of jobs require STEM skills, and America needs a world-class STEM workforce to address the 'grand challenges' of the 21st century, such as developing clean sources of energy that reduce our dependence on foreign oil and discovering cures for diseases*. Success on these fronts will require improving STEM literacy for all students; expanding the pipeline for a strong and innovative STEM workforce; and greater focus on opportunities and access for groups such as women and underrepresented minorities" (emphasis mine). White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "President Obama Launches 'Educate to Innovate' Campaign for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (Stem) Education," Press Release, Nov. 23, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-launches-educate-innovate-campaign-excellence-science-technology-en.
"Science and technology have been fundamental priorities of this government since we took office in 2006. *We have long recognized that support for research, innovation and highly qualified people are key to our country's future economic prosperity and to improving the quality of life of Canadians. Our long-term economic plan, Advantage Canada, has science and technology at its core.* Ever since its 2006 release, *Advantage Canada* has driven our investments in creating the best-educated, most skilled and most flexible workforce in the world." Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, emphasis mine. (Note the significance of including a prefatory statement from the Minister of Finance in a document about science education). In Industry Canada, *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage: Progress Report 2009* (Ottawa, ON: Publishing and Depository Services, Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2009), 5.

4 For example, see Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, *The Heart of the Matter: The Humanities and Social Sciences for a Vibrant, Competitive and Secure Nation* (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2013). Though this document does claim to advocate for considerations that go "beyond the immediate and instrumental" (13), its explicit goals (19) are quite focused on such matters.

that encourages interdisciplinary conversation. My approach will be somewhat indirect, gradually unfolding a story that begins with studies of bacteria in the early twentieth century, and that takes us through to present-day understandings of our own deep history. I don't want to be too prescriptive in interpreting the "moral of the story," but will simply note some of the issues that arise and their implications, which demonstrate the potential for biology to deepen our understanding of epistemology (*how* we know what we know), deep human history (our ancestral connection to the rest of the living world), and theology—all of which shape our understanding of our humanity. In the process, it should become clear that biology belongs as a core part of a liberal arts curriculum. Let's start with a bit of history, to illustrate a topic that ought to be central to science education but seems to be grossly under-emphasized: how we acquire scientific knowledge in the first place.

## The Molecular Biology Revolution: Biology and Epistemology

### *The Scientific Method: Transformation of Bacteria*

In January of 1928, Frederick Griffith, a medical officer with the British Ministry of Health in London, published an account of surprising observations in his work with *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, a species of bacterium[5] capable of causing severe systemic infections in humans and other mammals.[6] During the first decades of the twentieth century, bacteriologists had described several distinct strains of this species: avirulent (harmless) strains, and a number of types of virulent (disease-causing) strains, numbered I, II, III, and so on. Cells of the virulent strains surround themselves with a capsule—a thick coat of complex carbohydrates—while the cells of the avirulent strain are uncoated. The virulence of the encapsulated bacteria is due to the capsules, which protect the bacteria from being devoured by their hosts'

5 Bacteria constitute one of the three great "domains" (super-kingdoms) of living things. They are a ubiquitous group of single-celled organisms, too small to be seen with the naked eye. Because we cannot see them, the most familiar bacterial species tend to be those that make themselves known for other reasons, such as by causing human diseases. Examples of such familiar pathogens include certain strains of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), *Salmonella enterica, Listeria monocytogenes*, *Bacillus anthracis*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, and *Yersinia pestis* (the causative agent of the plague). However, by far the majority of bacteria are harmless or beneficial, such as the trillions that are normal inhabitants of your intestines. They were the first living things to appear on Earth, and if one takes a strictly quantitative view, remain the dominant life form on the planet: though we cannot see them, collectively, bacteria may outweigh all other living things combined. See Maureen A. O'Malley and John Dupré, "Size Doesn't Matter: Toward a More Inclusive Philosophy of Biology," *Biology and Philosophy* 22 (2007): 156–158.

6 As the species' name suggests, pneumonia (fluid-filled lungs) is a common result of illness caused by this bacterium, but not all infections with *S. penumoniae* result in pneumonia, and several other bacteria (and some viruses) can cause similar symptoms. See D. Bogaert, R. de Groot, and P.W.M. Hermans, "*Streptococcus pneumoniae* Colonisation: The Key to Pneumococcal Disease," *Lancet Infectious Diseases* (2004): 144.

white blood cells.[7] Griffith found that a mere 10–100 virulent bacteria injected into a mouse could cause fatal illness, while billions of avirulent bacteria could be injected without ultimately causing any symptoms.[8]

When *S. pneumoniae* are grown in the laboratory, the virulence (or lack thereof) of each strain is a heritable characteristic: virulent cells divide to produce virulent cells, and avirulent cells produce avirulent cells.[9] Interestingly, Griffith found that when he injected a mixture of *live* avirulent bacteria and *dead* virulent bacteria into mice, a fatal illness ensued. Most curiously, in several cases when he isolated the disease-causing bacteria from the blood of the dead mice, he found that these were virulent, encapsulated *S. pneumoniae* of the same strain as the *dead* cells used in the inoculated mixture.[10]

Griffith's findings, and his efforts to interpret them, provide an excellent example of scientific logic at work. The scientific method involves (a) formulating a hypothesis (explanation) to account for observed phenomena or patterns, (b) making predictions of what one would expect to see if a hypothesis were true, and then (c) devising and running experiments to test this hypothesis, according to whether or not the predictions are borne out.[11] Multiple explanations of a given phenomenon are often possible; properly designed experiments can eliminate some of these as false, leaving a smaller subset of hypotheses, or ideally a single hypothesis, consistent with experimental results.[12] With this background in mind, let us consider some of the explanations (hypotheses) that one could propose to explain Griffith's observations, the predictions they imply, and the results of experiments that tested those predictions.

One possibility is that the virulent bacteria produce a substance that is fatally toxic to mice, which persists in or on the bacteria after their death.[13] If this explan-

7 Hobart A. Reimann, "Variations in Specificity and Virulence of Pneumococci During Growth *in vitro*," *Journal of Experimental Medicine* 41 (1925): 598–599.

8 Frederick Griffith, "The Significance of Pneumococcal Types," *Journal of Hygiene* 27 (1928): 125.

9 Reimann, "Specificity And Virulence of Pneumococci," 599.

10 Griffith, "Pneumococcal Types," several experiments described over 134–146.

11 This is an admittedly idealized summary—the process is rarely so smooth. See Barry Gower, *Scientific Method: A Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 12.

12 Here, I am sketching a brief summary of scientific reasoning as a mixture of deductive falsification and "inference to the best explanation." This is far from an exhaustive or universally accepted description of the process of scientific discovery, particularly among professional philosophers of science, but it fits my philosophically unsophisticated experience of the way most scientists work, most of the time. See Samir Okasha, *Philosophy of Science: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15–17, 29–33; Geoffrey Gorham, *Philosophy of Science*: *A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), 32–40; 90–92.

13 Given that the mice exhibited symptoms of bacterial infection rather than acute poisoning prior to dying, this is a dubious explanation at the outset, but let's consider it nevertheless, as a

ation were correct, then one would predict that dead, virulent bacteria should be fatal to mice regardless of whether or not they are mixed with live, avirulent bacteria. Griffith tested this prediction by injecting dead virulent bacteria alone, and found that by themselves, they did not affect the mice.[14] Thus, he could rule out this explanation—he had falsified the hypothesis of direct toxicity.

A second possibility is that the heat treatment Griffith used to kill the virulent bacteria actually left some survivors, which were then responsible for killing the mice. This explanation appears particularly reasonable, given Griffith's recovery of live virulent bacteria from the blood of the deceased mice. But if there had been live bacteria remaining in Griffith's "killed" preparations, these would have proliferated when the preparations were inoculated into a suitable nutrient broth. This was not the case—Griffith was unable to isolate any living bacteria from his killed-virulent preparations, despite going to great lengths to do so.[15] Additionally, had the mice succumbed to virulent survivors in the "killed" preparations, then one would expect these preparations to cause fatal illness regardless of whether or not they were mixed with live, avirulent bacteria. However, as described above, the killed virulent bacteria by themselves had no effect on the mice.

Third, it is conceivable that the avirulent bacteria somehow enveloped themselves in the capsule material from the killed virulent cells, rendering themselves virulent in the process. The mixtures Griffith used typically contained at least 100-fold more dead virulent cells than live avirulent cells, so initially there may have been ample capsule material present for the avirulent cells to ensheath themselves, if it were possible for them to collect and recycle the material. However, if this were the case, then the avirulent bacteria would have been merely transiently pathogenic, and would have continued to give rise to avirulent bacteria as they proliferated. In this case, one would expect a culture derived from the "pseudo-virulent" bacteria isolated from dead mice to lose virulence over time. Again, the bacteria that Griffith isolated from his deceased mice argue against this explanation. As described above, these were normal virulent bacteria, which produced virulent progeny. A single, isolated bacterium from the deceased mice could give rise to billions more bacteria, all of them encapsulated and virulent.[16]

Griffith's 1928 paper describes additional alternative hypotheses and experiments he used to test them, until ultimately he was left to conclude that some interaction between the dead-virulent and live-avirulent bacteria was transforming the avirulent bacteria into virulent bacteria. The transformation was stable and heritable, in that the transformed bacteria and their progeny remained virulent indefin-

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didactic exercise.

14 Griffith, "Pneumococcal Types," several experiments described over 134–140, esp. Tables VII, VIII, X, and XI.

15 Ibid., 134.

16 Ibid., Table IX, 136, among several other demonstrations.

itely. Though he did not exhaustively test hypotheses about how the transformation took place, he proposed that the capsular material of the virulent bacteria somehow acted as a stimulus (or perhaps as starting material) to activate a latent ability to synthesize capsules.[17] This mechanism was consistent with his observations, but other alternative explanations would come to light later, as we shall see.

## Lessons about Scientific Epistemology

### *"Proof" and "Facts"*

In popular discourse, "scientific proof" or "scientific facts" are often invoked as the pinnacle of certainty—the implication being that science is about proving facts about nature. This view of science is not quite accurate, however, in subtle but important ways. To illustrate why, consider the following question: after 1928, could one justifiably say that the transformation of live bacteria via interaction with dead bacteria was a "proven fact?" The answer depends on what we understand facts to be—the term can be a slippery one. In the context of the scientific method, "facts" refer to phenomena that can be observed or experienced directly: the sun rises in the east and sets in the west; mercury, when heated in air, transmutes into a red powdery substance, which, when heated further, reverts to metallic mercury.[18] In this sense, Griffith had not established transformation as a fact, in that he had not actually followed individual avirulent bacteria and watched them transform into virulent ones. Rather, he had proposed transformation as a hypothesis to explain the fact that mixtures of live avirulent *S. pneumoniae* and dead virulent *S. pneumoniae* were fatal to mice. This explanation was consistent with the results of several experiments as described above, but even his final explanation was not the only possible one. Perhaps the interaction between the live avirulent and dead virulent bacteria brought the virulent bacteria back to life. Perhaps, despite Griffith's reputation as a careful, meticulous experimenter, something had gone wrong somewhere, and his observations were not to be trusted. Perhaps God, for inscrutable reasons, was playing tricks—only making it appear as if Griffith's heat-killed bacteria were dead in the first place, or that the avirulent bacteria were really avirulent to begin with.

Despite these possible alternative explanations, I hope it is nevertheless clear that (assuming the reliability of Griffith's equipment and technique) the transformation hypothesis he developed is a better one than hypotheses of bacterial resurrection or divine mischief, though all are logically defensible. Thus, bacterial transformation, though not a "proven fact," was surely a strong interpretation, given the results of Griffith's experiments, our everyday experience of life and death, and the core Christian belief that God is not capricious.

In an age where science often is called on (at least in rhetoric, if not in practice)

17 Ibid., 130.

18 Gower, *Scientific Method,* 13.

to inform individual and collective behaviour, it is essential for us to be able to distinguish between better and worse interpretations of evidence—despite the inherent limitations of the scientific method.[19] Ought we to vaccinate our children? Purchase a hybrid car? Reopen the Atlantic cod fishery? Tax carbon emissions? If we expect these questions to be answered unambiguously by science alone, we leave ourselves vulnerable to arguments that spuriously magnify or misrepresent inevitable uncertainties in scientific consensuses.[20] Conversely, if we do not acknowledge that there are compelling reasons to believe that some explanations are better than others, we become unable to distinguish good science from bad, and enter into a state of relativistic paralysis. Examples of the scientific method at work—such as the Griffith story, but even better, direct encounters in the lab or field—can help to transform students into citizens capable of constructive participation in society. If Christian liberal arts institutions are to take seriously the call to love our neighbours—and to love wisely—surely it behooves us to include the sciences as part of the core curriculum, and to ensure that our science courses include not just memorization of "facts," but the opportunity to practice scientific logic by designing experiments and interpreting their results.

## The Mechanism of Transformation

### *Individuals Have Blurry Boundaries*

After 1928, Griffith turned his attention to other matters, but other bacteriologists became intrigued by the phenomenon of transformation he had described. Of particular note were Oswald Avery and his students at the Rockefeller Institute in New York City.[21] Within a few years, Avery and others were able to show that the transformation of avirulent bacteria did not require interaction with intact virulent bacteria; rather, it was effected by a chemical substance present on or within the virulent bacteria cells.[22] Avery referred to this substance as the "transforming principle." In the early 1940s, he and postdoctoral associates Colin MacLeod and Maclyn McCarty were able to determine its chemical nature. Their approach was

19 For a thorough discussion of the need for these skills, and practical advice on how to develop them, see Sherry Seethaler, *Lies, Damned Lies, and Science: How to Sort Through the Noise around Global Warming, the Latest Health Claims, and other Scientific Controversies* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2009).

20 Current "controversies" about anthropogenic climate change and evolutionary theory are examples of these vulnerabilities, to name just two. For an excellent presentation of this issue, see Naomi Oreskes and Eric M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010).

21 Now Rockefeller University.

22 J. Lionel Alloway, "The Transformation *in vitro* of R pneumococci into S Forms of Different Specific Types by the Use of Filtered Pneumococcus Extracts," *Journal of Experimental Medicine* 55 (1932): 94–95; J. Lionel Alloway, "Further Observations on the Use of Pneumococcus Extracts in Effecting Transformation of Type *in vitro*," *Journal of Experimental Medicine* 57 (1933): 269.

to separate extracts from type-III virulent bacteria into distinct biochemical components—e.g., carbohydrates, proteins, etc. By eliminating components that were *not* necessary for transformation, eventually they were left with a purified transforming principle, which could be chemically characterized.

As part of this work, McCarty tested Griffith's hypothesis about the role of capsular carbohydrates in transformation, by treating extracts from killed virulent bacteria with an enzyme that specifically and completely degraded the virulent cells' carbohydrate capsule.[23] Extracts treated in this way retained essentially all of their transforming activity, suggesting that the capsular material itself was not responsible for transformation, in contrast to Griffith's view. It appeared that the transformed cells' ability to produce a capsule was a newly acquired characteristic they carried autonomously, independent of any residual carbohydrate from the original virulent cells. This result suggested transformation was a genetic change, rather than activation of a latent capacity.

Subsequent work to eliminate the other cellular components that were not necessary for transformation led to the isolation of a fibrous material, so potent that billionths of a gram were sufficient to transform avirulent bacteria into virulent ones.[24] This material contained essentially all of the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) from the virulent cells, and no detectable amounts of the other major biochemical constituents of living organisms: ribonucleic acid (RNA), lipids, carbohydrates, or proteins. In 1944, Avery, MacLeod, and McCarty published a carefully argued account of their findings, in which they proposed that DNA was the agent responsible for causing transformation in *S. pneumoniae*.[25] By extension, it seemed possible or even probable that DNA could be the chemical carrier of genetic information.

Avery and colleagues' 1944 paper has been identified by several prominent scientists, including Nobel laureates Joshua Lederberg and James Watson, as the inspiration to dedicate their emerging research careers to the study of DNA.[26] Arguably, it marks the beginning of the era of molecular genetics. Initially however, the interpretation that DNA carries genetic information was far from universally accepted; several alternative explanations of Avery and colleagues' findings were

23 Maclyn McCarty, *The Transforming Principle: Discovering That Genes Are Made of DNA* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 129. The initial isolation and discovery of the enzyme McCarty used is described in René Dubos and Oswald T. Avery, "Decomposition of the Capsular Polysaccharide of Pneumococcus Type III by a Bacterial Enzyme," *Journal of Experimental Medicine* 54 (1931): 51–71.

24 McCarty, *Transforming Principle,* 160.

25 Oswald T. Avery, Colin McLeod, and Maclyn McCarty, "Studies on the Chemical Nature of the Substance Inducing Transformation of Pneumococcal Types: Induction of Transformation by a Desoxyribonucleic Acid Fraction Isolated from Pneumococcus Type III," *Journal of Experimental Medicine* 79 (1944): 156.

26 James D. Watson, *The Double Helix: A Personal Account of the Discovery of the Structure of DNA* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), 12–13; Joshua Lederberg, "Genetic Recombination In Bacteria: A Discovery Account," *Annual Review of Genetics* 21 (1987): 29–31.

possible. For example, it was conceivable that an undetectable trace contaminant in their samples was the transforming principle, rather than DNA itself. Furthermore, it was unclear whether their observations, which pertained to a single trait in a single species of bacterium, were generally applicable to other traits in other organisms. At the time, it was not even known whether bacteria had "genes" of the same sort as organisms like plants and animals.[27] The reactions to Avery and colleagues' work, and discoveries arising from it, represent a fascinating chapter in the history of science[28] and a case study in the philosophy and epistemology of science.[29] Again, as evident from the above discussion of Griffith's work, science is a process of considering and testing alternative explanations of observations, not immune from ambiguity, and about which reasonable people can disagree—at least, at the outset.

Eventually scientific inquiry tends to converge on a consensus as initial results are replicated, confirmed, and extended by other workers; we now know, as certainly as we know anything, that Avery and his students had indeed hit upon a central tenet of biology: DNA is the chemical carrier of genetic information. What is less often emphasized, however, is that their elucidation of the mechanism underlying transformation had also demonstrated the phenomenon of horizontal gene transfer (HGT)[30]—that genetic material can move from one organism into another, and become integrated into its new host's genome.

Just as DNA is the genetic material for all living things, and not just bacteria, so HGT has been documented in all types of life in the time since Avery's seminal work. As we have sequenced the entire genomes of many organisms in the past fifteen or so years, we have been able to "see" DNA from multiple sources in a given genome, and the significance of horizontal gene transfer as a source of new genetic variations (the raw material for evolutionary change) has become apparent. Thus, the world has become a stranger place than we might have suspected—one in

27 Lederberg, "Discovery account," 23.

28 McCarty, *Transforming Principle,* Ch. XII (pp. 219–235); Joshua Lederberg, "The Transformation of Genetics by DNA: An Anniversary Celebration of Avery, MacLeod and McCarty," *Genetics* 136 (1994): 423–426; Maclyn McCarty, "A Retrospective Look: How We Identified the Pneumococcal Transforming Substance as DNA," *Journal of Experimental Medicine* 179 (1994): 385–394; Heather Dawes, "The Quiet Revolution," *Current Biology* 14 (2004): R605-R607.

29 Eleonora Cresto, "In Search of the Best Explanation about the Nature of the Gene: Avery on Pneumococcal Transformation," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 39 (2008): 65–79; Jacob Stegenga, "The Chemical Characterization of the Gene: Vicissitudes of Evidential Assessment," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 33 (2011): 105–127.

30 "Horizontal" distinguishes this sort of gene transfer (between individuals who are not necessarily related) from the transmission of genetic information from parents to progeny—"vertical" gene transfer. HGT is also called *lateral* gene transfer, or LGT, but I prefer "horizontal" as it better contrasts with the vertical transmission of parenthood.

which HGT blurs the boundaries between individuals, and even between species. In fact, genetic material may move between organisms belonging to entirely different domains of the standard biological classification system, e.g., from bacteria (described above in note 5) to eukaryotes—the domain that includes the complex multicellular organisms most familiar to us (fungi, plants, and animals, including ourselves) as well as a number of single-celled organisms. We are all, in this sense, chimeras.

## Mitochondria and Their Origins

*Biology and History*

There have been many incidents of horizontal gene transfer between bacteria and eukaryotes in earth's history, and humans carry evidence of several. Perhaps the most impressive example of such HGT involves organelles (subcellular structures) known as mitochondria. Every cell in your body (with a few exceptions) contains these tiny, membrane-bound compartments, as do the cells of almost all other eukaryotes. You may have been introduced to mitochondria in grade school or high school biology as the "powerhouses" or "energy factories" of our cells. They are the sites where organic molecules are completely oxidized, forming carbon dioxide and water, and releasing chemical energy in a useable form. You can get a sense of the critical importance of the energy generated by mitochondria by holding your breath—the main reason we need to breathe is to supply our mitochondria with the oxygen that is required for them to do their work, and to remove the carbon dioxide they generate as a byproduct of their activity.

Over the course of the twentieth century, cell biologists described several lines of evidence implying that mitochondria are semiautonomous entities.[31] Mitochondria are not constructed *de novo* by cells, but arise via division of preexisting mitochondria. They also synthesize some of their own biomolecules using molecular machinery of their own construction, which is distinct from the machinery used by the rest of the cell. Perhaps most significantly, mitochondria carry copies of their own DNA genomes, containing anywhere from a few dozen to a few hundred genes, depending on the species.[32] Interestingly, mitochondrial genomes are circular DNA molecules, like bacterial chromosomes, and different in this respect from the linear chromosomes found in our cells' nuclei. Furthermore, when we examine the sequences of nucleotide building blocks in mitochondrial DNA, we find that they are most similar to gene sequences in a

31 A. Gibor and S. Granick, "Plastids and Mitochondria: Inheritable Systems," *Science* (1964): 892–893; Lynn Sagan, "On the Origin of Mitosing Cells," *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 14 (1967): 263–265.

32 Michael W. Gray, Gertraud Burger, and B. Franz Lang, "Mitochondrial Evolution," *Science* (1999): 1476.

group of bacteria known as the α-proteobacteria.[33] For these reasons, and a number of others that are beyond the scope of this essay, it is now widely accepted that mitochondria are degenerate descendants of an ancient ancestor of modern α-proteobacteria, which took up residence within a group of host cells that ultimately gave rise to modern eukaryotes. Living as symbionts[34] within a host cell is an obligate way of life for many species of bacteria. In fact, large groups of modern α-proteobacterial species survive only as inhabitants of eukaryotic cells—sometimes as beneficial mutualists, sometimes as pathogenic parasites that exploit their hosts. (The distinction between parasitism and mutualism may be blurry and context-dependent).[35] Several such species serve as modern examples of bacteria at various steps along a path to becoming simplified components of their hosts' cells.[36]

Mitochondria, though semiautonomous, depend on the cells in which they reside to produce the great majority of molecular components that compose them. In humans and nearly all mammals, mitochondrial genomes encode only thirteen of the hundreds of different proteins they contain.[37] The remainder of the genes needed to build and maintain a mitochondrion are found in the DNA within the cell nucleus, but retain clear marks of their bacterial origins. In other words, the evolutionary origin of eukaryotes must have involved massive transfers of genetic material from ancient bacterial symbionts into the genomes of

33 D. Yang and others, "Mitochondrial Origins," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 82 (1985): 4445–4446; Christian Esser and others, "A Genome Phylogeny for Mitochondria among α-proteobacteria and a Predominantly Eubacterial Ancestry of Yeast Nuclear Genes," *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 21 (2004): 1645–1646.

34 Symbiont: An organism living in close association with another. From the Greek: *syn-* "together"; *bios* "life."

35 X-J Yu and D.H. Walker, "Family I. Rickettsiaecea," In D.J. Brenner, N.R. Krieg, and J.T. Staley, eds., *Bergey's Manual of Systematic Microbiology, vol. 2, Part C: The Proteobacteria*, 2nd ed. (New York: Springer, 2005), 96–116. An emerging example of the fine line between parasitism and mutualism among members of the α-proteobacteria is the genus *Wolbachia*, whose members may play both parasitic and mutualistic roles among members of different host species, or even in the same host. See Elizabeth A. McGraw and Scott L. O'Neill, "*Wolbachia pipientis*: Intracellular Infection and Pathogenesis in *Drosophila*," *Current Opinion in Microbiology* 7 (2004): 67–70; Arturo Casadevall, "Evolution of Intracellular Pathogens," *Annual Review of Microbiology* 62 (2008): 19–33; Takahiro Hosokawa and others, "*Wolbachia* as a Bacteriocyte-associated Nutritional Mutualist," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 107 (2010): 769–774; Sandra B. Andersen and others, "Dynamic *Wolbachia* Prevalence in *Acromyrmex* Leaf-cutting Ants: Potential for a Nutritional Symbiosis," *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* 25 (2012): 1340–1350; Mark J. Taylor and others, "*Wolbachia* Filarial Interactions," *Cellular Microbiology* 15 (2013): 520–526.

36 John P. McCutcheon and Nancy A. Moran, "Extreme Genome Reduction in Symbiotic Bacteria," *Nature Reviews Microbiology* 10 (2012): 13–26.

37 Gray, Burger, and Lang, "Mitochondrial Evolution," 1476.

their host cells.[38] In some eukaryotic lineages, mitochondria retain more of their ancestral gene complements than in others, but in every case, hundreds of genes must have migrated from proto-mitochondria into hosts' nuclear DNA. Over time, the hosts and their bacterial inhabitants became single biological entities, in which the distinct ancestral lineages underwent a division of labour, with the host cell's nuclei becoming the repository for most of the genetic information required to propagate the system, and the mitochondria becoming responsible for generating most of the energy needed to run it.[39]

Recent work suggests that this asymmetric partitioning of genetic information and bioenergetic function is more than just historical happenstance: because of physical and energetic constraints, it is in fact a necessary precondition for the existence of cells that can maintain enough genetic information to allow for great complexity. Thus, complex eukaryotic life owes its origin to the transformation of host cells by DNA from proto-mitochondrial, bacterial symbionts.[40] If this is so, then the potential for human life was contingent on the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between proto-eukaryotic host cells and their symbiotic ancestral bacteria, eons ago.

How do we "know" that humans share the same evolutionary heritage as other eukaryotes? There are many lines of evidence to suggest this, of which the mitochondrial story is a newer example. As it happens, transfer of DNA sequences from mitochondria to chromosomes in the nucleus of their host cells was not just a historical event, but is an ongoing process that continues to randomly generate intra-chromosomal sequences of mitochondrial DNA, fittingly called nuclear mitochondrial sequences, or numts (pronounced "noo-mites").[41] Recently formed[42] numts are merely *copies* of DNA sequences that remain present in mitochondria, which distinguishes them from nuclear DNA that moved from mitochondria to the nucleus early in eukaryote evolution, but otherwise the general phenomenon is the same. In sexually reproducing, multicellular organisms

38 Jeremy N. Timmis and others, "Endosymbiotic Gene Transfer: Organelle Genomes Forge Eukaryotic Chromosomes," *Nature Reviews Genetics* 5 (2004): 123.

39 Nick Lane, "Energetics across the Prokaryote-Eukaryote Divide," *Biology Direct* 6:35, 10–12.

40 Lane, "Energetics," 8, 14; Nick Lane and WIlliam Martin, "The Energetics of Genome Complexity," *Nature* 467 (2010): 932–933.

41 Paul van den Boogaart, John Samallo, and Etienne Agsteribbe, "Similar Genes for a Mitochondrial ATPase Subunit in the Nuclear and Mitochondrial Genomes of *Neurospora crassa*." *Nature* 298 (1982): 187–189; Jose V. Lopez and others, "Numt, a Recent Transfer and Tandem Amplification of Mitochondrial DNA to the Nuclear Genome of the Domestic Cat," *Journal of Molecular Evolution* 39 (1994): 177,185; Einat Hazkani-Covo, Raymond M. Zeller, and William Martin (2010), "Molecular Poltergeists: Mitochondrial DNA Copies (*numts*) in Sequenced Nuclear Genomes," *PLoS Genetics* 6 (2010): e1000834, 1.

42 "Recent" in this case meaning within the past 10–100 million years, though there are documented cases of truly recent events (i.e., within a person's lifespan). See Hazkani-Covo and others, "Molecular Poltergeists," 2.

like ourselves, when numts arise in cells that will go on to form eggs or sperm, they may be passed on from one generation to the next, serving as markers of descent within a particular lineage.[43] Therefore, as a lineage splits into distinct species over evolutionary time, members of the descendent lineages will retain the numts that were present in their common ancestor (albeit in somewhat distinct forms, as a result of the lineage-specific accumulation of random mutations). As such, the presence of particular numts in species' genomes serves as a novel tool for inferring common descent and relative degrees of kinship between those species.

As an example of how we can infer evolutionary history from numts, consider the genomes of humans and other primates. Work to date has identified over 600 numts in the human genome. Thirty-four of these appear to be unique to humans, whereas 391 are shared between humans and chimpanzees.[44] By "shared," I mean that the same numt sequence is found in the same relative position in the chromosomes of each species, implying that the sequence was present in the common ancestor of both. Some of those 391 are found only in humans and chimpanzees, while others are shared with yet other primates, such as orangutans, gorillas, and macaque monkeys, in a pattern consistent with generally accepted evolutionary relationships between these species.[45] This is strong evidence of human descent from a common ancestor shared with other primates (if more is really needed). Furthermore, other nuclear genes of ancient mitochondrial origin that occur universally in the genomes of humans and other eukaryotes point to the common evolutionary heritage we all share.[46]

Of course, at a certain level, none of this is "proof" of common ancestry between humans and other species. Alternative hypotheses can be proposed to explain the presence of similar numts in humans and other organisms. Some of these are explicitly theological. For example, one could suggest that, rather than being randomly generated genetic entities, numts have intrinsic functions that depend on their being located in a specific place in the genome of the species in which they are found. In other words, in order to create humans, God had

43 Hazkani-Covo and others, "Molecular Poltergeists," 9.

44 Einat Hazkani-Covo and Dan Graur, "A Comparative Analysis of *numt* Evolution in Human and Chimpanzee," *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 24 (2007): 14; A.I. Gaziev and G.O. Shaikhaev, "Nuclear Mitochondrial Pseudogenes," *Molecular Biology* 44 (2010): 359.

45 Einat Hazkani-Covo, "Mitochondrial Insertions into Primate Nuclear Genomes Suggest the Use of *numts* as a Tool for Phylogeny," *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 26 (2009): 2175–2179.

46 David Alvarez-Ponce and James O. McInerney, "The Human Genome Retains Relics of its Prokaryotic Ancestry: Human Genes of Archaebacterial and Eubacterial Origin Exhibit Remarkable Differences," *Genome Biology and Evolution* 3 (2011): 789; Thorsten Thiergart and others, "An Evolutionary Network of Genes Present in the Eukaryote Common Ancestor Polls Genomes on Eukaryotic and Mitochondrial Origin," *Genome Biology and Evolution* 4 (2012): 478–479.

to include the numts we possess, in the genomic locations in which they are found—their presence in our genome reflects not shared ancestry with other organisms, but the necessities of special creation. The merit of this hypothesis is quite dubious, however, due to the fact that we can document the ongoing, random formation of numts in humans and other species, and by the lack of any evidence of an essential role for particular numts.[47] In fact, a number of numts have been described that have detrimental effects on the individuals in which they are found.[48]

A second alternative hypothesis is that the numts we share with other species were placed in our genomes by our Creator merely to give the appearance of common descent with other species. This hypothesis is theologically suspect, for its implication that God is deceptive and capricious.[49] It is also fundamentally anti-scientific, because if God has set out to fool our scientific rationality in this case, what basis is there for believing that any particular scientific insight reflects ontological reality?

## Coming Full Circle: Biology, Theology, and the Liberal Arts

### *Biology and Biblical Literalism*

And so we've come around to evolution. In biology, most extended discussions about why things are the way they are tend to end up here. Evolutionary theory is perhaps the most transformative aspect of the study of biology, because it is central

47 Tobias Mourier and others, "The Human Genome Project Reveals a Continuous Transfer of Large Mitochondrial Fragments to the Nucleus," *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 18 (2001):1833; Junko Tsuji and others, "Mammalian NUMT Insertion is Non-random," *Nucleic Acids Research* 40 (2012): 9076. Note that the *non*-randomness referred to by Tsuji and coworkers refers to physical and chemical characteristics of DNA sequences into which numts insert, rather than insertion *for* a particular functional purpose. Their work strongly suggests that numts have no intrinsic functionality. Hypotheses that numts may have a role in facilitating DNA repair (Hazkani-Covo and others, "Molecular Poltergeists," 8) suggest a *general* role for numts, but still depend on common ancestry to explain the existence of particular numts shared among different species.

48 Hazkani-Covo and others, "Molecular Poltergeists," 2–3. Such numts are invariably recently formed ones, present in only a few people: a result that would be expected, given that numts with severe detrimental effects such as death or sterility would not be passed down to subsequent generations, and would not persist over evolutionary time.

49 This is the same sort of "divine mischief" hypothesis I have described above in the discussion of Griffith's results. Such hypotheses of divine trickery have been proposed from time to time by young-earth creationists as alternative explanations of other observations that imply evolution. For concise and scathing reviews of the theological merit of this sort of argument, see Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution," *American Biology Teacher* 35 (1973): 126; Kenneth Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution*, P.S. edition (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 78–80.

to all modern biological thought,[50] and, from a Christian perspective, it carries clear theological implications. Some biology students will be forced to confront cherished beliefs in a literal interpretation of the creation stories of Genesis 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–25. However, these students most likely will face the same issue in other components of a Christian liberal arts program:[51] biblical studies, anthropology, ancient history, and philosophy, among others. On the matter of biblical interpretation in general, or interpretation of the creation stories in particular, I would suggest that biology presents no special challenges.

*Biology and Theodicy*

There are, however, other theological domains in which biology raises or adds to issues that must be confronted. As an example, take the problem of evil—specifically, "natural evil," by which I mean the fact of death, disease, deprivation, and other such universally experienced sources of suffering, in a world that Christians believe was created by a good and omnipotent God. Evolutionary theory raises this problem, because adaptive evolution, being driven by the principle of natural selection,[52] cannot occur without death or competition for limited resources. As such, a world in which humans and other species arose by evolution necessarily entails death, and cannot be reconciled with belief in a prelapsarian paradise free of death and disease, as proposed by some interpreters of Genesis 3 and Romans 5. If the living world as we know it was shaped by evolution, then there could never have been a time in which living things existed without death (and, with the origin of consciousness, some form of suffering). Thus, if we are to take evolution (and by extension, scientific rationality) seriously, then theologies proposing that death and suffering entered the world—or indeed the entire cosmos—only after a primal act of human disobedience cannot serve as useful theodicies (explanations for the problem of evil) or as foundations on which to build theologies of salvation and atonement.[53] Rather, we need another way to explain why God has apparently built

50 Dobzhansky, "Light of Evolution," 25–29.

51 Difficulties with a literalistic interpretation of the biblical creation stories date back to the time the biblical canon was assembled, and certainly did not originate with Charles Darwin!

52 This is not to say that natural selection is the only mechanism responsible for evolution (genetic drift is a clear example of another) but insofar as evolution is *adaptive* (that is, leading to organisms better suited to their environments) natural selection is surely a necessary driving "force."

53 Again, this is certainly not an original statement on my part, but rather one that is much discussed among theologians, with divergent conclusions. See, for example, Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2: Existence and the Christ* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 39–43; Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine and Human*, Enlarged ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 222–223; Michael Lloyd, "The Humanity of Fallenness," in *Grace and Truth in a Secular Age*, Timothy Bradshaw, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 78–81; Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 28–29.

death and its corollaries into the created order.

I cannot resolve the problem of evil here, but will point out an interesting approach taken by the philosopher of science Michael Ruse, who invokes none other than Richard Dawkins to make his case. Dawkins has written, "However diverse evolutionary mechanisms may be, if there is no other generalization that can be made about life all around the Universe, I am betting that it will always be recognizable as Darwinian life. The Darwinian Law [that adaptive complexity can only arise via natural selection] may be as universal as the great laws of Physics."[54] Ruse points out that if all life must be Darwinian life, this in itself amounts to a theodicy—God had no choice but to include death as part of the fabric of creation, if God was to create complex life.[55] I waver on whether I find this sort of "neo-Leibnitzian" theodicy satisfying,[56] but the fact that evolutionary theory is relevant in asking *and* answering such metaphysical questions illustrates why biology belongs as an integral component of the liberal arts. There is room for fruitful interdisciplinary conversation here. In the end, I find the words of physicist and priest John Polkinghorne to be helpful and comforting:

> Exactly the same biochemical processes that allow cells to mutate and produce new forms of life will allow other cells to mutate and become malignant. The presence of cancer in an evolving creation is part of its necessary cost. It is neither a gratuitous horror nor the product of creatorly incompetence. Here science offers a profoundly helpful insight to theology, as the latter wrestles with the problem of the existence of suffering on the scale that we experience it. I am greatly moved by the frequency with which this problem of suffering surfaces in the discussion period following a lecture on science and theology, and I am grateful that there is something useful to be said from the scientific perspective. Of course, I am not suggesting that all perplexities and sorrows are thereby removed. There remains a deep mystery about individual destiny in this regard. The happenstance of the world can be extremely painful

54 Richard Dawkins, "Universal Darwinism," in *Evolution from Molecules to Men*, ed. Derek S. Bendall (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 423.

55 Michael Ruse, *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian? The Relationship Between Science and Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 136–137. This argument invokes constraints on God's creative freedom, which may strike some twenty-first century readers as heretical. A satisfactory argument in favour of limited divine omnipotence is beyond the scope of this essay. For now, I'll simply note that the subject is intertwined with the long history of thinking about the nature of reality, including the tension between realist and nominalist conceptions of reality, and I would place myself among those who argue that even a free and omnipotent creator cannot do what is *logically* impossible—for example, God would not be able to make 1 + 1 = 3. One way of summarizing Dawkins's statement, on which Ruse's proposed theodicy is based, is that life is logically possible only in an evolutionary universe.

56 For an example of a recent counterargument, see Robert J. Russell, "Natural Theodicy in an Evolutionary Context: The Need for an Eschatology of New Creation," in *Theodicy and Eschatology*, eds Bruce L. Barber and David J. Neville (Hindmarsh, Australia: ATF Press, 2005), 131–132.

and diminishing, but it is at least delivered from being seen as the express imposition of divine will.[57]

*Biology and Theological Anthropology*

With respect to evolution and humanity, it has become fashionable to assert that our evolutionary kinship with animals eliminates any special status for humans: we are not essentially different from our relatives.[58] Even if one is willing to read the Genesis creation stories as myths (in the technical sense of the word) they clearly assert a special status for humans, and thus, the view that humans are merely one organism among many is difficult to reconcile with Scripture, however we interpret it. If humans have no distinctive ontological status, then how can we understand ourselves as being made in the image of God?

The leap from a belief in human evolution to a belief that humans are "mere animals" is certainly not a necessary move. In his ambitious book *Darwin's Pious Idea*, Conor Cunningham argues compellingly that such a leap is absurd, and in fact anti-evolutionary, in the sense that it denies the uniquely human characteristics that have arisen via evolution. (If evolution does not result in genuinely novel and distinctive traits, does that not trivialize the whole concept of evolution?) Furthermore, if the common ancestry of life is grounds for denying a special status to humans, that would imply that there is no ontological difference between any organisms. Following this line of thought to its logical conclusion, Cunningham mischievously asks, "But if this is true, why do we persist with the illusion that, yes, it's fine to cut grass, but not so fine to cut the neighbour's dog, just as it's fine to eat chicken, or at least carrots, but not our neighbour's children, even if there are five of them and they are rather noisy?"[59] There is an inconsistency in denying ontological distinctiveness on the one hand, while at the same time adhering to moral imperatives rooted in that very concept.

With respect to humans as having been created in the "image of God," Old Testament scholar Bill T. Arnold proposes that such language in Genesis 1 refers to humanity's function in creation—to act as representatives of the divine, or "rulers" on earth.[60] In that function, as implied by Genesis 2:15, humans are not to be "there

57 John Polkinghorne, *Scientists as Theologians: A Comparison of the Writings of Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke, and John Polkinghorne* (London, UK: SPCK Press, 1996), 48.

58 For a series of examples of such assertions, see Conor Cunningham, *Darwin's Pious Idea: Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get It Wrong* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 3–5.

59 Ibid., 5–6.

60 Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 45. Granted, "rulership" is rather loaded language, but I think it is fair to say that (a) to be given license to rule is not the same thing as being given freedom to "do whatever you want," and that (b) given our reflective consciousness and capacity to conceive of and respond to the divine, we do have an apparently unique capacity to act as divine regents. Whether we have

solely for self-gratification or enjoyment, but as the representative of Yahweh God to cultivate the earth (*'bd*, or simply 'serve' it) and as the one responsible for keeping or protecting it (*imr,* 'save, protect')."[61] Again, given that we have evolved to have such attributes as we have, I see no necessary contradiction between humans as evolved creatures, and humans as carriers of the divine image.

The first chapters of Genesis describe humanity as unique: part of the natural world and dependent on the natural order, while at the same time "special" in the sense of manifesting the image of God (Gen. 1:20–29; 2:7–15). I am struck by the compatibility between ancient Hebrew and modern biological views of humanity. The latter teaches us that we, like all other living things, are products of an evolutionary process, subject to the same laws of chemistry and physics as our biological cousins. And yet, evolution (God's method of creation[62]) has produced in us a rational consciousness that partially transcends the evolutionary process: becoming conscious of ourselves and our evolution grants us some freedom from being passively shaped by natural forces. I would further suggest that this freedom is an essential component of what it means to be made in the image of God—part of how we reflect God into creation.[63]

*Biology and the Liberal Arts*

The foregoing discussion illustrates how the study of biology intersects at many points with the core concern of liberal arts education: learning about our humanity, the world, and the cosmos as a means to free ourselves to participate effectively and constructively in society. In this sense, biology is a natural part of a comprehensive liberal arts program. This role is not diminished in a Christian setting, with its foundational theological interest in the role of humanity as divine representatives in creation. If anything, the theological focus only helps to free our conception of biology from being subservient to political imperatives of the day—for example, from being merely a pursuit whose principal importance is to train skilled workers and develop new technologies for the modern economy. Lest I be accused of ignoring pragmatic "real-world" considerations, let me stress that teaching biology in a liberal arts context need not be antithetical to students' learning of marketable technical and cognitive skills. Rather, it gives foundational purpose and meaning to such learning, and roots it in a richer understanding of our humanity (both theological and biological). In the long run, such a foundation may be more pragmatic, rather than less so.

Humans—finite, created beings—depend on our Creator both for our existence, and to be saved from our inevitable failings and hubris. Biological education

done, or will do so well and wisely, is another matter.

61 Ibid., 59.

62 See Dobzhansky, "Light of Evolution," 127.

63 N.T. Wright, *For All the Saints: Remembering the Christian Departed* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2003) 44.

ought not to lead us to dispute this statement, but rather to appreciate it more fully in our modern context. In the words of science historian John C. Greene, "science becomes pointless and even destructive unless it takes on significance and direction from a religious affirmation concerning the meaning and value of human existence."[64] How will biology transform the women and men who study it as presented in the context of a Christian liberal arts program? God willing, by deepening and nuancing their understanding of what it means to be human, teaching them that they are marvelous and wonderful creatures indeed, but not gods.

64 John C. Greene, "Darwin and Religion," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103 (1959): 725.

# Salvador Dalí: Mathematical Mystic

*Tim Rogalsky*

Famed equally for melting clocks, curled moustaches, and commercialized kitsch, Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) has been called "one of the twentieth century's most defining and controversial artists."[1] His surrealist paintings of the 1920s and 30s are praised by critics and public alike as the product of a countercultural genius. His late work, on the other hand, is frequently dismissed as shallow, unimaginative, and market driven. Art critic Robert Hughes, for example, in an article "celebrating" Dalí's centenary, writes that "most Dalí after the late-30s became either kitschy repetition of old motifs or vulgarly pompous piety on a Cinemascope scale."[2] In 1934, Dalí was expelled from Paris's Surrealist group, in part for succumbing to mass market appeal. The founder of that movement, André Breton, formed an anagram of "Salvador Dalí" using *avida*, Spanish for greedy. That anagram became one of Dalí's most famous nicknames: "Avida Dollars."

There are depths to late Dalí, however, that are not always appreciated. An avid reader, he kept abreast of scientific developments like relativity and quantum mechanics, incorporating them into his work long before popular media would make the ideas accessible to the broader public. He studied Spanish mysticism and converted to Catholicism, although he was at best ambivalent about his faith. While his contemporaries ridiculed and rejected realism and iconography, Dalí, always countercultural, paid homage to the lifelike religious masterworks of the Renaissance.

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1 Stephen Borys, Foreword to *Dalí Up Close* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2014), 9.

2 Robert Hughes, "Homage to Catalonia," *The Guardian*, March 13, 2004, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/mar/13/art.

At a time of increasing "conflict" between science and religion, the late work of Salvador Dalí is frequently marked by a delightful fusion of the two. This chapter will pay particular attention to the creative and fruitful—yet paradoxical—interplay between mathematics and mysticism. Mysticism, at its most basic level, is an experience of the presence of the divine.[3] For Christians, mysticism is a spiritual experience in which the invisible God becomes consciously present to us. For Dalí, math and science become a kind of conduit to that spiritual world. They allow us to see the true world, as it really is. As a Christian mathematician, I find it absolutely fascinating—and exceedingly cool!—to discover a secular artist using mathematics to connect to Spirit.

I have a friend who is a mediator. At the outset of a first meeting, she will seat the parties around a table and place a wood sculpture in the centre of the table. The sculpture is ingeniously carved to look like a ballerina from one angle, and a sailboat from another. The participants are asked to describe what they see, and are surprised that two people can look at the same object and see such different things. Conflict, she will tell them, is the same. We tend to think that there is only one way to see what has happened, but there is always another side. There is always another, equally valid, perspective. So too for Dalí.

The *Paranoiac Face,* painted in 1935, is a great example. It was inspired by a postcard, a photo of an African hut, with villagers seated in front of it. Dalí first saw the photo from the side, and his initial impression was: This is a new Picasso portrait! Inspired by the postcard, Dalí painted a similar scene. Viewed from one perspective, he has painted a hut, with trees behind and robed occupants in front. But turn the painting ninety degrees—change your perspective—and the hut becomes a Picassoesque face, complete with full red lips.

Dalí was using a surrealist technique known as the paranoiac critical method. Paranoia, here, refers to the mind's ability to interpret images in new, creative, unique ways. It's the kind of thing I've sometimes done with my children. We'll lie on our backs in a field, stare at the clouds, and let our minds relax. Soon we begin to see things—different things—in the same clouds. To them a dragon, to me a kayak. The artistic brilliance of Dalí was directly related to his ability to see the world in a truly delusional, paranoid way. He spoke of forcing himself to think contradictory, irrational thoughts. He could then release his hold on reality and allow his subconscious to come to the fore, to see things in a state of controlled delirium. "My whole ambition," Dalí once said, "is to materialize the images of my concrete irrationality."[4]

3 The category of "mysticism" is somewhat elastic. For a thorough treatment, see Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), especially the General Introduction and the Appendix.

4 Salvador Dalí, *La Conquête de l'Irrationnel*, (Paris: Éditions surrealists, 1935); in Haim Finkelstein, ed., trans., *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12–13.

He played with these double images throughout his career. Another example, *Double Journalistic Image* (1972), was shown recently in the Winnipeg Art Gallery's exhibit, *Dalí Up Close.*[5] Dalí said that he liked to look at newspapers upside down, and let his imagination run wild. The work has four pictures he found in the *Sunday News* of February 18, 1973. He retouched them, and put them in a rotating frame. Visitors to the exhibit could manually rotate the frame, and watch as the change in orientation transforms the subjects. What is clearly a portrait of a face from one perspective becomes a French soldier in full uniform from another.

The observer creates reality. This is a theme that comes up again and again in Dalí's work. In part, at least, it comes from mathematical physics. Early in the twentieth century, quantum mechanics was changing our view of the world around us, and Dalí kept abreast of these developments. There is the observer effect, for example. To observe the position of an electron, scientists would shoot a photon of light at it. But when the photon hits the electron, that photon changes the electron's position. It's like checking the air pressure in your tires. When you do, a little bit of air is released, thereby changing the pressure. The act of observation creates a new reality.

Another example is the uncertainty principle, proposed by theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg. In quantum mechanics, the more precisely we know the position of a particle, the less likely we can know its momentum, its speed. So there's the classic joke that one day Heisenberg was caught speeding. The officer asked, "Sir, do you know how fast you were going?" And Heisenberg replied, "No, but I know where I am!" In quantum mechanics, observation affects what we can know.

And in some interpretations, observation not only changes what we know, it changes what is. This is related to what we call "wave function collapse." In 1925, Erwin Schrodinger developed the wave equations that describe quantum mechanics. The very strange thing about the equations is that they do not describe actual reality, only potential reality. We cannot know the actual state of a quantum system, only the probabilities of its many possible states—until the system is observed. Before it is observed, all of its possible states are superimposed over each other in a probabilistic wave function. Upon observation, that wave function collapses into its actual, true state.

There are many ways to imagine how the mathematical model applies in the real world. The most common is known as the Copenhagen interpretation: observation creates reality. Usually this is explained by a thought experiment, called Schrodinger's Cat. Put a cat into a box, said Schrodinger, together with poison, a radioactive source, and a radioactivity monitor. If the monitor detects radioactive decay, it will release the poison, killing the cat. Now seal the box so you cannot observe what is happening. If the radioactive source exists simultaneously in all of its possible states, then it is simultaneously both decayed and not decayed. The cat is therefore simultaneously both dead and alive. According to the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum

5 Andrew Kear, curator, *Dalí Up Close, September 27, 2014–January 25, 2015* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2014).

mechanics, only the act of observation will collapse those possibilities into reality. Open the box. Observe. If the cat is dead, you have killed it! Schrodinger invented the thought experiment in 1935 to show how ridiculous the Copenhagen interpretation was, but it remains the dominant understanding of his equations today. Observation creates reality.

In part, at least, Dalí's double images are playing with these paradoxical concepts in modern physics. Another can be seen in one of Dalí's most famous surrealist paintings, *The Persistence of Memory* (1931). On the beach in the centre of the scene is a somewhat amorphous object. Here's a little Rorschach test. What do you see when you look at it? What's the first thing that comes into your mind? Create your own reality. My teenage son saw a duck, lying down, its bill nestled into its chest. My students have seen driftwood, a porpoise, an amoeba, and more. Turn the image ninety degrees clockwise, and what do you see now? Do you recognize it as a face? In fact it's a self-portrait, one that appears often in his work. So, is the object on the beach driftwood, a duck, a face? Yes, it is all of those things and more, all superimposed upon each other in a wave function. When you observe it, that wave collapses into the reality that you have created.

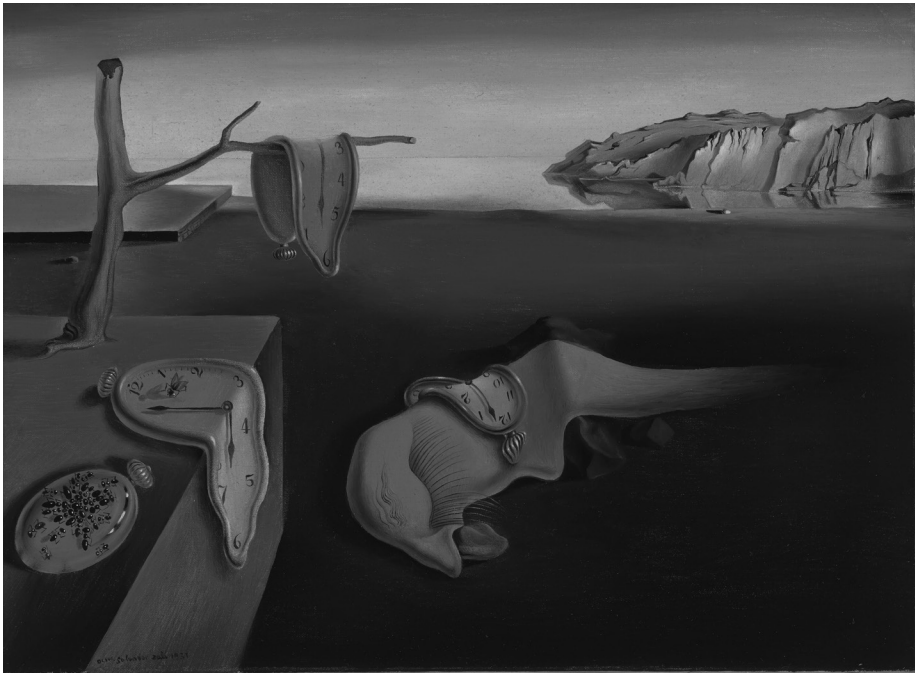

**Figure 1 Persistence of Memory**
Dali, Salvador (1904–1989) The Persistence of Memory. 1931. Oil on canvas, 9 1/2 x 13" (24.1 x 33 cm). Given anonymously.

The famous melting clocks in the painting reference modern physics in another way. Just as quantum mechanics features heavily in Dalí's art, so too does Albert Einstein's relativity. The mathematical details of relativity involve frames of reference, and perspective, and momentum, and the space-time continuum. But to put it briefly, and somewhat crudely, Einstein said this: Time is relative. The faster you move, the slower time passes. The effect is tiny, but observable. A space station crew, for example, after six months in orbit, will age a fraction of a second less than the rest of us. Time bends.

The pocket watch is in some ways the iconic symbol of Newtonian physics. God was sometimes referred to as the Clockmaker who designed the universe, wound it up, and left it to run. A watch is stable and steady; it's rigid; it's mechanistic; it's deterministic. With Einstein, however, our perspective on the universe changed. Things are in fact much more fluid. Time and space—space-time—bends. That's one perspective, at least, what a physicist might see in the melting clocks.

Here's the story Dalí himself told. He and his wife, Gala, had been entertaining a guest with wine and Camembert cheese. After their guest left, Dalí had a short nap. As he woke, in that that paranoiac, dreamlike state of being half-awake, half-asleep, a state aptly named hypnagogia, he looked at the clock and thought, "Time has passed very slowly." He then saw that the block of cheese had melted in the sun, and thought, "Time has been melting!"

Of course, Dalí's experience of the fluidity of time while sleeping, may be a nice metaphor for relativity. Einstein once said, "Put your hand on a hot stove for a minute, and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour, and it seems like a minute. That's relativity!" In modern physics, the passage of time is relative. It depends on your perspective, on your position in the geometry of space-time, a geometry that is not flat but curved. In his book *Conquest of the Irrational*, Dalí puts all of this together, and writes that his melting clocks are the "soft, extravagant, and solitary paranoiac-critical Camembert of time and space."[6]

Here, in *The Persistence of Memory*, we see the world as it really is. Observation creates reality. Time bends. Those of us who observe the world through our five senses see time as linear and fixed—unchanging in its relentless forward progression. But science gives us a kind of a sixth sense, it reveals that which is hidden. It shows us that time is malleable and relative.

This is one of the ways in which Dalí's work is mystical. That term goes back to the ancient Greek word *mystikos*, which referred to someone initiated into a mystery religion. A mystic is one who knows things spiritually, who experiences things that transcend physical reality. A mystic becomes aware of things as they really are, things that are concealed or hidden from the rest of us. Scientists, in this sense, are mystics. We are initiates into a mystery "religion" that reveals the secrets of the universe. Think of the divine as true reality. Science, then, reveals

6 Dalí, *Conquête*, 27.

the divine, for through science, an awareness of the divine becomes present in our inner acts. And that, by definition, is a mystical experience.

Let us move now to Dalí's late work. In the 1940s he became more and more fascinated with science. For a time he practically fixated on the atomic model of matter. Matter consists of atoms, and atoms consist primarily of empty space: miniscule particles—nucleus and electrons—separated by nothing. If you could eliminate all that empty space, and collect all the subatomic particles into one dense set, physicists tell us that the entire human race would fit in the volume of a sugar cube! As astrophysicist Sir Arthur Eddington put it, "Matter is mostly ghostly empty space."[7]

In the early 1900s scientists were trying to figure out what that looked like. First, Ernest Rutherford said an atom has a nucleus at its centre, and electrons orbiting around the nucleus, like the planets orbit around the sun. Then Einstein said no, actually electrons don't orbit at all. Electrons emit and absorb energy, in discrete units called quanta. They make instantaneous quantum leaps around the nucleus. Then Rutherford found that the nucleus itself has subatomic particles—protons and neutrons. No, said Schrodinger, subatomic particles aren't actually particles at all, they're waves. And in the end scientists agreed that they're both—particles and waves, wavicles! It was a confusing time, with many scientific battles over who had the correct model of the atom. Dalí followed it all, and found that all the theories had one thing in common: Matter is not continuous. Matter is discrete and quantized. Physical reality appears to be smooth. In truth it is lumpy, separated by empty space.

*Leda Atomica* (1949) is Dalí's first attempt at a painting that demonstrates this actual discontinuity of the world. The work references the ancient Greek myth of Leda and the Swan—in which Zeus, in the form of a swan, seduces Leda on the night of her marriage to the king of Sparta. The mode of the painting is realism, but with a surrealist twist: "I decided to turn my attention to the pictorial solution of quantum theory, and invented quantum realism in order to master gravity . . . I painted Leda Atomica, a celebration of Gala, the goddess of my metaphysics, and succeeded in creating 'floating space.'"[8] Everything is separated, in suspension. The pedestal parts, Leda, the swan, nothing touches. Even the sea hovers above the earth. The metaphysics of the painting represents, counterintuitively, physics as it truly is. By seeing reality as we do not see it, we are brought into a deeper harmony with the fundamental nature of the universe.

This quantum realism is celebrated in *Dalí Atomicus* (1948) by photographer Philippe Halsman. Dalí and the *Leda Atomica* appear to float in the background, with cats and water suspended in motion in the fore. Elliot King writes that after seeing Dalí's still unfinished *Leda Atomica* in New York, "Halsman asked about its

7 Quoted in Peter Russell, *From Science to God: A Physicist's Journey into the Mystery of Consciousness* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2005), 48.

8 Quoted in Gilles Néret, *Dalí* (Cologne: Taschen, 2011), 79.

**Figure 2 Leda Atomica**
Dali, Salvador (1904–1989)
GALA, Dali's wife, as Leda atomica (Atomic Leda). 1949.
Museo Dali
© Salvador Dali, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/ SODRAC (2016)
Photo Credit: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

significance, and the painter answered that it represented atoms and electrons in suspension. The next morning, Halsman proposed photographing Dalí in a similar state of levitation."[9] He was thrilled with the idea: a realist photograph, capturing surrealistically objects both real (Dalí) and surreal (Leda), in the surreal suspended state that is their true reality!

> "I know what the picture should be," Dalí told Halsman. "We take a duck and put some dynamite in its derrière. When the duck explodes, I jump and you take the picture."
>
> "Don't forget that we are in America," Halsman replied. "We will be put in prison if we start exploding ducks."
>
> "You're right," Dalí told him. "Let's take some cats and splash them with water."[10]

The photograph was published in LIFE magazine, and became an iconic image for both Halsman and Dalí. It too was featured in the WAG's *Dalí Up Close*

9 Elliot King, "Dalí After 1940: From Surreal Classicism to Sublime Surrealism," in *Salvador Dalí: The Late Work,* ed. Elliot King (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2010), 25.

10 Meredith Etherington-Smith, *The Persistence of Memory: A Biography of Dalí* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995), 310.

**Figure 3 Dali Atomicus**
Philippe Halsman/Magnum Photos

exhibit. Recognizing that 1948 was long before the age of Photoshop, a visitor's first question was often, "How?" A proof sheet of unretouched outtakes shows the cables used to suspend the paintings, the hand of the assistant holding the chair, and the prop holding up the footstool. Halsman had four other assistants—one holding a bucket full of water, three holding cats. On the count of three, the water and the cats were thrown into the air. On the count of four, Dalí jumped.

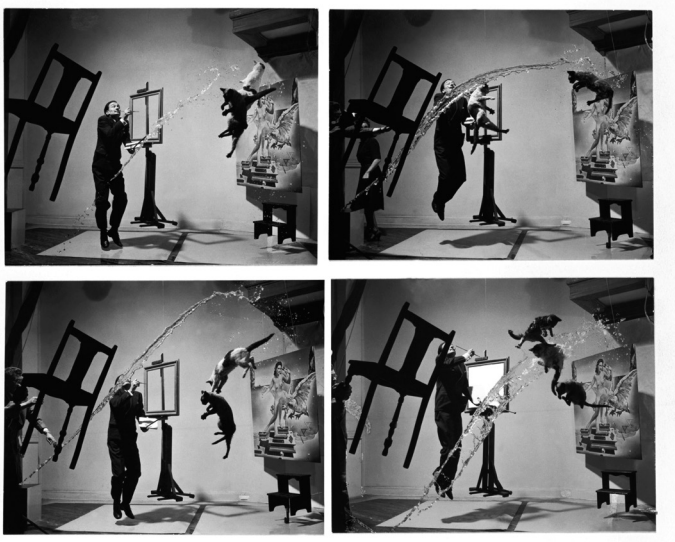

**Figure 4 Dali Atomicus contact sheet**
Philippe Halsman/Magnum Photos

King adds, "The shoot lasted five hours and required twenty-six separate takes. Halsman was quick to affirm that the cats were well cared for … between shots, he towel-dried them and fed them Portuguese sardines."[11]

There is also a fascinating mathematical perspective on the painting. Dalí's visual interpretation of the myth of Leda was inspired, in part, by a geometric ratio used often by Leonardo da Vinci. Da Vinci found the story of Leda particularly intriguing, sketching and painting it several times. Most of that work is lost to us, but there is a copy, *Leda and the Swan,* made by one of his pupils, Francesco Melzi between 1508 and 1515. In 1946, Dalí was introduced to a geometrical analysis of Melzi's *Leda*, an analysis based on what has become known as the golden ratio. That ratio came to represent, for Dalí, a kind of mystical connection to the universe.

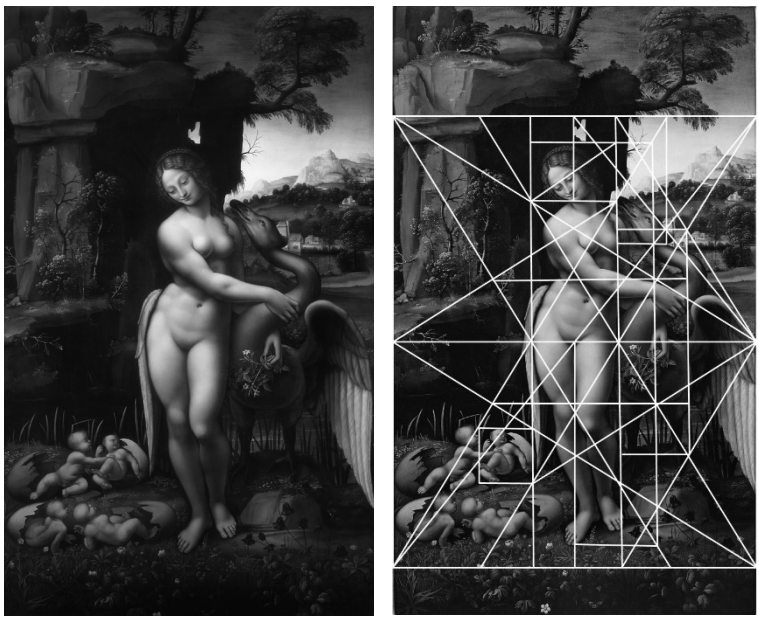

**Figure 5 Leda and the Swan**
Melzi, Francesco (1493–1570), attr.: Leda and the Swan (copy after a lost original by Leonardo da vinci, painted about 1505–1515). Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. Oil on wood panel, 130 x 77.5 cm. Inv. 1890 no. 9953.© 2016. Photo Scala, Florence - courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali

Golden ratio analysis of the compositional elements has been reproduced from the analysis of Matila Ghyka.

The golden ratio, phi, is an example of what we call sacred geometry. To speak of geometry as sacred may seem oxymoronic! But consider this. Mathematics is an activity of pure thought. As a discipline that studies objects of no concrete existence,

11 King, "Dalí After 1940," 25.

it lies above and beyond the range of the merely physical human experience. To put it another way, mathematics is transcendent. As such, it can provide insight into the noumenal, that which cannot be recognized by the five senses. Our word geometry is from the two Greek words *ge* (earth) and *metria* (to measure). This is especially important in sacred geometry. It's not just about the mathematics, it's about mathematical relationships in the natural world, the relation between thought and reality, between the abstract and the concrete. Sacred geometry both transcends and illuminates physical reality.

The story of Dalí's introduction to the golden ratio begins in the Pythagorean religious community of ancient Greece. For the Pythagoreans, numbers were universal principles, living entities that permeate everything from the heavens to human ethics. The monad 1 is not a number per se, but is rather the origin and generator of all numbers. It is as physically real as the four elements —earth, water, air, and fire—and is at the same time the metaphysical unity at the source of all creation. The monad represents, in other words, the cosmos, the entire universe. The dyad 2 is the number of woman, a celebration of the mystery of reproduction in which one being divides into two. More generally, even numbers are feminine because they are divisible—4 divides into two 2s, 6 divides into two 3s, etc. Odd numbers, on the other hand, are masculine. Not only are they indivisible in this way, they also dominate over even numbers, since the combination of any odd and even number remains odd: 2+3=5, for example. Thus the triad 3, as the first masculine number, represents man.

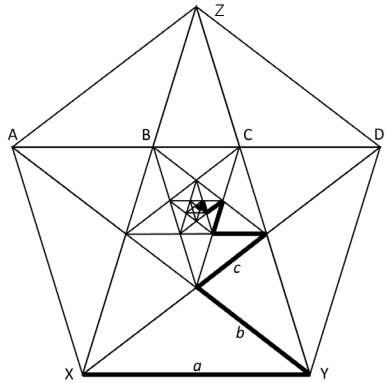


**Figure 6** Pentagons, Pentagrams, and the Golden Ratio

This makes 5 very special: as the combination of 2 and 3, the union of woman and man, 5 is the number of love. The geometry of love, for the Pythagoreans, was the five- pointed star, the pentagram, which became the symbol of their community. Notice that a pentagram nests perfectly inside a regular pentagon (a figure with five sides of equal length), and that a smaller pentagon nests perfectly inside the pentagram. The Pythagoreans studied the geometric relationships within these infinitely nesting sets. One of their discoveries is that the zigzagging path of ever diminish-

ing line segments (shown in bold) has a very peculiar property: each line segment diminishes by exactly the same factor. The ratio of *a* to *b* is exactly the same as the ratio of *b* to *c*, a pattern which continues forever. That ratio became known as phi, so named after Philolaus, a disciple of Pythagorus. It is more commonly known as the golden ratio, and the triangles formed by phi, for example triangle XYZ, are known as a golden triangles.

In about 300 BCE, Euclid, a professor at the Library of Alexandria, gathered together the geometrical results of his time, including those of the Pythagoreans, into a collection of thirteen books called *Elements.* This became, in the West, the standard mathematics textbook for the next two millennia. In Book VI of *Elements*, Euclid provided the now-standard definition of phi as the division of a line into extreme and mean ratio: "A straight line is said to have been cut in extreme and mean ratio when, as the whole line is to the greater segment, so is the greater to the less."[12]

Fast forward to the Renaissance, and Friar Luca Pacioli. A Franciscan monk, Pacioli took a vow of poverty and became a wandering scholar, lecturing on philosophy and mathematics. Pacioli wrote several books, but his masterwork, *De Divina Proportione*, popularized phi for the modern world. The book describes the mathematical properties of phi and its use in architecture. Pacioli renamed it the Divine Proportion, suggesting that it shares many characteristics of God. For example, just as in Euclid's definition, phi is one ratio within three lengths, so too God is one in three. Just as the infinitely nested, diminishing line segments within the pentagram are always in the ratio phi, so too God is infinite, omnipresent, and immutable.[13]

Leonardo da Vinci met Pacioli in 1496, and studied Euclid under his tutelage. The two collaborated on *De Divina Proportione*, with Leonardo supplying the geometric illustrations. In about 1509, engravings were made of Leonardo's drawings and the book was printed for the public, so these mathematical images qualify as the first works of Leonardo to be mass-produced. In the latter years of his career, da Vinci and his students would frequently use the golden ratio as a composition technique for their paintings.

Fast forward again, now to the time of Salvador Dalí. In the 1940s, a Romanian prince, Matila Ghyka, was a professor of mathematics. He was pursuing research on Renaissance mathematics, focusing particularly on Pacioli and da Vinci and their use of the golden ratio. Prince Ghyka met Dalí at a dinner party in California in 1946, and presented him with a copy of Ghyka's newly published *Geometry of Art and Life*. The book describes some of the many places in which this geometry may be found—in architecture and sculpture, in flowers and plants, in shells and marine animals, in the human body, and in classic works of art. The geometry of art and life, claims Ghyka, coincide in the golden ratio:

12 Euclid, *Elements Book VI*, definition 3.

13 Mario Livio, *The Golden Ratio: The Story of Phi, the World's Most Astonishing Number* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 131.

> Among the proportions which have … produced the recurrency and consonance of similar shapes, the Golden Section seems to have been paramount. We have seen that this was equally true in biology; there is a Geometry of Art as there is a Geometry of Life, and, as the Greeks had guessed, they happen to be the same.[14]

It is precisely in this sense that the golden ratio is sacred, and mystical. It represents a kind of geometrical unity in both the physical and the aesthetic worlds, and is therefore a connection to that which is beyond physical reality. Mathematical geometry reveals a secret, hidden order in the natural world. The geometric forms thus carry sacred meaning, and act as a transcendent link to the divine.

That 1946 dinner party marked the beginning of a fruitful collaborative relationship. Two weeks later, the two met again. Not only had Dalí read *Geometry of Art and Life*, he showed a full grasp of the compositional techniques. Of many examples from the art world, Ghyka included a plate of the copy of Leonardo's *Leda and the Swan* (Figure 5). In the reproduction, Leda and the Swan are superimposed with golden rectangles and triangles, demonstrating some of the ways in which the painting is composed according to this sacred geometry. One year later, the two exchanged a series of letters, joining forces on the geometric design of *Leda Atomica* (Figure 2). In one preparatory drawing,[15] Dalí wrote out the formula for the golden ratio, drew the pentagon and golden triangles of Figure 6, and then sketched

**Figure 7 Madonna of Port Lligat**
Salvador Dali
(Spanish, 1904 - 1989)
Madonna of Port Lligat. 1949
Oil on canvas, 48.9cm x 37.5cm.
59.9
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ira Haupt
Collection of the Haggerty Museum of Art. Marquette University


14 Matila Ghyka, *The Geometry of Art and Life* (New York: Sheed and Ward), 154.

15 Salvador Dalí, *Study for Leda Atomica*, 1947. Centre for Dalínian Studies of the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí.

the primary compositional elements within that form. The horizon line of the sea forms the pentagon's horizontal diagonal AD. The right leg of Leda and left wing of the swan lie along the diagonal XD. Leda herself is framed by the main golden triangle XYZ, her head and shoulders forming its upper, nested, golden triangle BCZ. For Dalí, as for Leonardo, the very geometric structure of the work celebrates the union of the human Leda with the divine Zeus—the melding of matter and spirit.

Now compare this painting to *The Madonna of Port Lligat* (1949), painted immediately after completing *Leda Atomica*. Notice the similarities. The landscape is the same—the Catalonian seashore, with a view of Port Lligat, where Dalí lived. The subject is the same—Dalí's wife Gala, the goddess of his metaphysics. The focus is the same—Gala's face, which appears exactly at the vanishing point, where all the perspective lines converge. The atomic suspension is the same—Dalí has painted matter as it is, not as it appears. The geometric composition the same—the pentagon and its golden triangles represent the earthly connection to spiritual reality. And there is more transcendence here. Notice the rectangular holes cut into the chests of Mary and Jesus. Dalí called these tabernacles, which in Hebrew theology is the mobile dwelling place for the divine. The divine spark resides within the chest of Jesus, who himself resides within a tabernacle of living flesh, inside his mother Mary. In layer upon layer, Dalí has depicted the Mystery of Incarnation:

> I visually dematerialized matter; then I spiritualized it in order to be able to create energy. The object is a living being, thanks to the energy that it contains and radiates … Every one of my subjects is also a mineral, with its place in the pulse beat of the world and a living piece of uranium … I maintain with full conviction that heaven is located in the breast of the faithful. My mysticism is not only religious, but also nuclear and hallucinogenic.[16]

This was Salvador Dalí's first foray into what he would later call "nuclear mysticism." Remember that at this time, science and religion were not yet completely separated. In many ways, they were (and are) interested in the same questions. Who are we? Why are we here? What is consciousness? These questions were especially pertinent at the birth of modern physics. Why does quantum mechanics require an observer? Is the objective world dependent on the mind?

Many scientists looked to Eastern mysticism for answers, and quantum mysticism was born. If observation creates reality, then quantum theory can unify the scientific and mystical approaches to consciousness. Consciousness is intimately linked with physical reality. There is no mind-body dualism. The two are one. Schrodinger, for example, argued that only conscious human observation can create reality. A machine, any instrument, cannot itself collapse the wave function. Only the human mind can create reality. If that is true, he claimed, then the human mind transcends

16 Robert Descharnes and Gilles Néret, *Salvador Dalí: The Paintings* (Köln: Taschen, 1994), 417.

physical reality. The mind is eternal.[17] That, perhaps, is what Dalí meant when he said, "Thinkers and literati can't give me anything. Scientists give me everything, even the immortality of the soul."[18] The Catholic Church was generally skeptical about nuclear physics, especially because it lent itself so easily to Eastern mysticism. But Dalí was so successful in uniting religious and atomic images that in 1949 *The Madonna of Port Lligat* was blessed by the Pope.

**Figure 8 Sacrament of the Last Supper**
Dali, Salvador (1904–89). La Ultima Cena, The Last Supper, 1955
Oil on canvas, 267cm x 166.7cm.

National Gallery of Art
Photo Credit: The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

In the summer of 1950, Dalí studied under a Carmelite monk, an expert in Spanish mysticism. He focused particularly on the works of Saint John of the Cross, a sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, and Ramon Llull, a medieval Franciscan mystic, poet, theologian, and mathematician. That summer marked a kind of conversion experience, after which he embraced again the Catholicism of his youth, albeit in his own Dalíesque way: "I am a Catholic without faith, and I make detours through science to join dogma again."[19]

Dalí announced his conversion, and the birth of nuclear mysticism, in an Octo-

17 Erwin Schrodinger, *What Is Life?* With *Mind and Matter & Autobiographical Sketches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 152.

18 *The Dalí Dimension*, DVD, directed by Susi Marquès (Barcelona: Media 3.14, 2004).

19 Quoted in King, "Dalí After 1940," 52.

ber 19, 1950 talk he titled, "Why I Was Sacrilegious, Why I Am Mystical." He brandished a two-pronged wooden fork and announced that one prong was the sacrilegious person of his past and the other the mystical person of his future, the two Dalís united by a single handle of ecstasy. He described the fork as "the dialectic … of the two antithetical but absolutely authentic Dalís," a "harmony of opposites."[20]

Consider, now, a few works from this time period that are particularly mathematical. In *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* (1955), collaborating with Matila Ghyka, Dalí located all of the compositional elements—the figures, the table, the bread, the wine, etc.—according to the golden ratio. Through geometry, Dalí has signified the sacramental nature of the meal, that the wine and bread are mystically connected to the divine. But there's more. Notice the three-dimensional object framing the scene: a geometrical figure with twelve faces, each of which is a regular pentagon. It is known as a dodecahedron is analyzed in Euclid's *Elements*, and is one of the objects discussed in *De Divina Proportione*. In fact, Dalí's rendering of it here copies that of Leonardo.

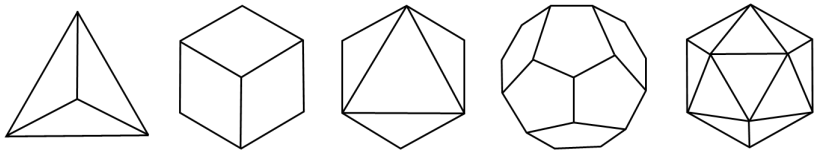

**Figure 9** The Platonic Solids: tetrahedron (fire), cube (earth), octahedron (air), dodecahedron (the whole), icosahedron (water)

Platonic solids (technically, regular convex polyhedra) are related to the regular polygons discussed above. A regular polygon bumps that up one level: it has sides of equal length—identical sides. A regular polyhedron has identical faces, each one an identical regular polygon. The ancient Greeks discovered that there are exactly five geometric objects with this property. In addition to the dodecahedron: the tetrahedron has four identical triangular faces; the cube has six identical square faces; the octahedron has eight triangular faces; and the icosahedron has twenty triangular faces.

For the Greeks these geometries were sacred, representing a mystical connection to the cosmos. In *Timaeus*, Plato associated them with the creative force of the cosmos:

> And now I will explain to you the generation of the world by a method with which your scientific training will have made you familiar. Fire, air, earth, and water are bodies and therefore solids …
>
> Let us now assign the geometrical forms to their respective elements. The cube is the most stable of them because resting on a quadrangular plane surface, and composed of isosceles triangles. To the earth then, which is the

20 Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 516.

> most stable of bodies and the most easily modelled of them, may be assigned the form of a cube; and the remaining forms to the other elements,—to fire the pyramid, to air the octahedron, and to water the icosahedron,—according to their degrees of lightness or heaviness or power, or want of power, of penetration.[21]

The four elements—earth, fire, air and water—are all Platonic solids—cube, tetrahedron, octahedron and icosahedron, respectively. That leaves one solid, the dodecahedron, unassigned. Plato associates it with the creation of the world as a whole: "this God used as a model for the twelvefold division of the Zodiac."[22] That phrase has been variously translated as "the god used it for the whole, making a pattern of animal figures thereon," "the god used it for the whole, broidering figures on it," and "the god used to delineate [outline] the whole."[23] The dodeca-

**Figure 10 Christ of St John of the Cross** Dali, Salvador (1904–89). Christ of St John of the Cross , 1951
Oil on canvas, 205cm x 116cm.
© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums and Libraries Collection

21 Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1572/1572-h/1572-h.htm.

22 Ibid.

23 Ronald F. Kotrč, "The Dodecahedron in Plato's 'Timaeus,'" *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 124 (1981): 212–215.

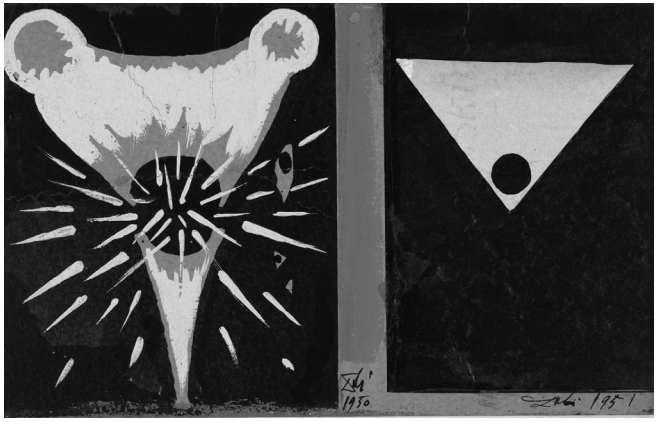

**Figure 11 Study for Christ of St John of the Cross**
Dali, Salvador (1904–89). Study for Christ of St John of the Cross
Gouache on paper, 17.2cm x 20.3cm.


hedron, while not itself one of the four elements, is the form of the cosmos itself, constituting "a geometrical matrix in the formation of the physical universe."[24]

In Dalí's *The Sacrament of the Last Supper,* then, the sacred geometry is twofold. The golden ratio represents a transcendent connection to the divine, a mystical link between consciousness and the natural world. With the dodecahedron, Dalí also introduces a cosmic dimension to this spirituality—the bread and wine connect us to the entire Cosmos. This is a sacrament for the All.

Another great example is Dalí's famous *Christ of St. John of the Cross*. It was inspired by the Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross, who sketched the crucified Christ, from above, as if seen by God the Father. In Dalí's rendition, there is no obvious agony. No blood, no nails, no crown of thorns. The cross floats ethereally over the bay of Port Lligat.

Studies for the painting show clearly the nuclear mysticism that lies behind it. The composition of the work is a circle (the head of Jesus) within an equilateral triangle (formed by his feet and hands). Here, too, Dalí is tapping into ancient Greek tradition. The circle, being without beginning and end, represents unity. As such, it is connected to the monad 1, that through which number comes to be. The circle is thus associated with the Divine, the Creative Power of the cosmos. The dyad 2, as the first number to separate itself from the Divine, represents division and duality. The monad and dyad come together in the equilateral triangle. With its three equal sides, holding within itself both unity and duality, it is the sacred symbol of harmony. Furthermore, as the number of fertility, the dyad corresponds to Divine Femininity. The triad 3 is thus the creative act of the Divine Father, as monad, and the Great Mother, as dyad. In *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, the equi-

24 Ibid., 222.

**Figure 12 Crucifixion**
Dali, Salvador (1904–89).
Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus).
1954.
Oil on canvas, 76 1/2 x 48 3/4in.
(194.3 x 123.8cm). Gift of The
Chester Dale Collection, 1955
(55.5).
© Salvador Dali, Fundació Gala-
Salvador Dalí/ SODRAC (2016)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Image copyright © The
Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Image source: Art Resource, NY

lateral triangle formed by the body of Jesus is Harmony and Creativity. The circle formed by his head is Unity and Divinity, the one in three. To put it another way, the sacred geometry of the crucifix is the cosmic Christ of Colossians 1:15–20.

The study also shows the circle as a nucleus, emitting its quantized electrons. Here's how Dalí explained the work: "It began in 1950 with a cosmic dream I had, in which I saw the picture in colour. In my dream it represented the nucleus of the atom. The nucleus later acquired a metaphysical meaning: I see the unity of the universe in it—Christ!"[25] The crucifixion transcends the merely physical. Christ is crucified for the universe, and that event is a creative act that has radically changed everything: "If anyone is in Christ, behold! There is a new creation!" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The last work is my personal favourite, *Crucifixion* (1954). Originally titled *Corpus Hypercubus*, the painting shows Jesus crucified on a strange kind of cross, floating in the sky above his home in Port Lligat, Gala gazing up at him. Notice that Jesus is painted with crisp, traditional realism, but the Christ is not bound

25 Nerét, *Dalí*, 81.

to the cross. The levitating body alone gives the painting a haunting, spiritual power, but there is more. The cross is composed of cubes, but none of them touch. The body of Jesus is suspended within one of those cubes, held there by floating cubic nails that make no contact with his hands and feet. The cross is nuclear—at the same time both substantial and insubstantial. It is dematerialized

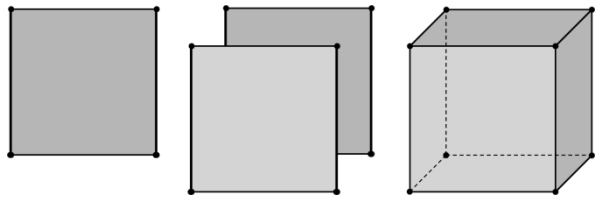

**Figure 13** Constructing a 3D cube from a 2D square

and then spiritualized, in Dalí's words.

But what of that strange looking cross? For those who don't recognize it as a famous mathematical object, Dalí gives you a hint, on the ground below it. In our physical, "real" world, there is no thing that is truly two-dimensional (2D). Try to imagine something that has length and width, but no height. That's hard to do. A standard sheet of paper, for example, which may appear 2D, has a height of approximately 0.05mm. Every physical object, no matter how thin, is still three-dimensional (3D). There is, however, a non-physical exception: a shadow has no thickness.

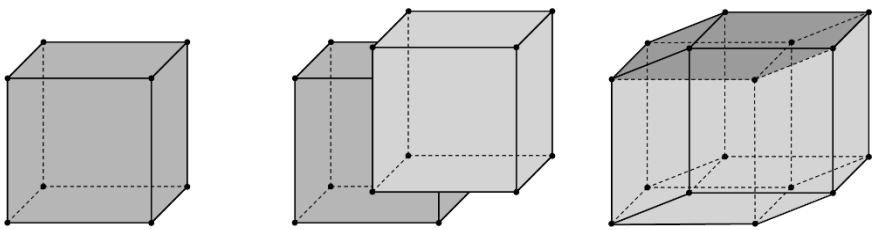

**Figure 14** Constructing a 4D hypercube from a 3D cube

On the ground below Christ, almost concealed in the checkerboard pattern, we see the dim shadow of the cross, a 2D projection of the "real" 3D object that lies above it. Dalí wants us to ask, if a shadow is a 2D projection of a 3D object, could our world contain things that are 3D projections of objects that exist in some fourth dimension?

That strange looking cubic cross is a mathematical representation of what we call an unfolded hypercube. It's a great example of the kind of abstract transcendence at which mathematics excels. Unconstrained by physical reality, mathematics can easily conceive of an abstract 2D object—for example a square. Think about how a 3D cube can be constructed from a 2D square: create a copy of the square; move it upwards into the third dimension; then join the two. This can be visualized in two-dimensional space as in Figure 13. That image is actually a 2D representa-

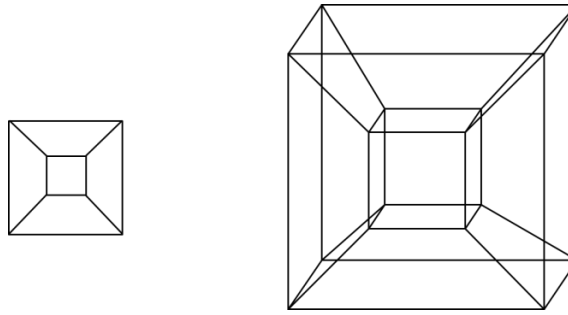

**Figure 15** Wireframe visualization of the cube and hypercube

tion of a 3D cube, but because we live in 3D space, we can easily visualize its true reality, in all three dimensions.

If a 3D cube can be constructed from a 2D "cube," what's to stop us from constructing a 4D "cube?" Mathematics, precisely because it transcends physical reality, says: "Nothing at all." How, then, might we visualize a 4D cube? Following the same algorithm, we would start with a 3D cube, move it "upwards" into the fourth dimension, and then join the two. The result is a 4D hypercube. Where the 3D cube has six square 2D faces, the 4D hypercube has eight cubic 3D faces. One of those faces, the "top" cube of the hypercube, is shaded in Figure 14. Of course, we don't live our lives in four dimensions, so it's difficult to imagine what that hypercube really looks like. By analogy with the cube, however, we can imagine this: If a being did live in four spatial dimensions, that being could look at a 3D representation of the hypercube, and easily visualize its true appearance in four dimensions.

Another way to picture 3D objects is with a wireframe. Looking at the cube from a position directly opposite one side, the back face would appear in perspective as a smaller square, centred within the front face. By analogy, were we a 4D being looking at the hypercube directly from one side, we would see the "back" (inner) face in perspective, as a smaller cube centred within the "front" (outer)

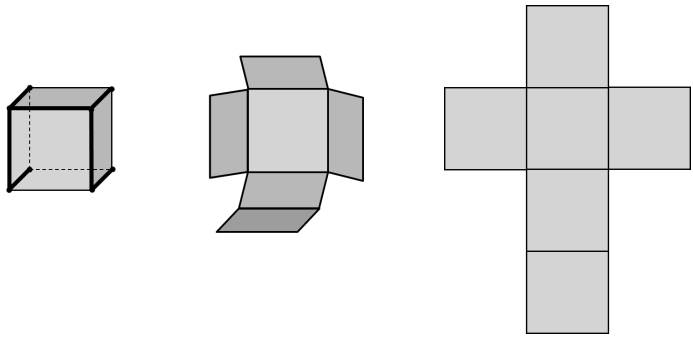

**Figure 16** Unfolding a cube

face. Visualized in this way, it is easier to see the geometrical composition of the hypercube, and its eight cubic faces.

These images of hypercubes may not yet have an obvious connection to the cross of *Crucifixion*. This requires a second layer of mathematical abstraction. A common elementary school activity is to unfold a cube. Imagine a hollow cube, made out of a single sheet of construction paper. Carefully cut along the edges shown in bold in Figure 16, then straighten out all of the sides. The result is an unfolded cube—a 2D cross. This helps us to imagine what it would be like to un-

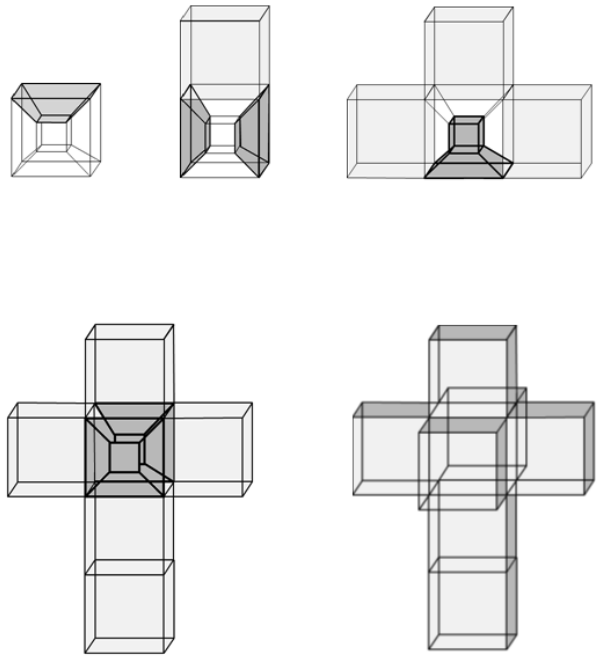

**Figure 17**
Unfolding a hypercube

fold a 4D hypercube into 3D space. The top cubic face would unfold upwards in Figure 17, the sides would unfold left and right, the bottom and interior cubes unfold down, and the last two cubes forward and backward. This is Salvador Dalí's strange, cubic cross: a 4D hypercube, unfolded into 3D space, and projected down to a 2D shadow on the ground.

In modern mythology the hypercube, sometimes known as a tesseract, has come to represent a portal for extra-dimensional travel. In Marvel Comics' *The Avengers*, for example, the tesseract is an Infinity Stone, a mystical artifact of great power. Among its many abilities, it can open a rift in space-time, which is how the villain Norse god Loki transports himself to Earth. The characters of Madeleine L'Engel's *A Wrinkle in Time* also use a tesseract to travel through space. It can "wrinkle time," creating short paths between distant points. Pop culture, then, has

the hypercube as a form of sacred geometry that both encompasses and transcends our three spatial dimensions.

In *Crucifixion*, Dalí has painted the extra-dimensional Son of God—the transcendent, eternal, cosmic Christ who exists at all times and in all spaces—as unfolded into one very specific space-time. The crucifixion, located at Port Lligat and witnessed by Gala, occurs at a particular time and place, for a particular person. But that event has universal implications. This is a theological Mystery that lies at the heart of the New Testament: The cross is particular; the cross is universal. In *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*, the bread and wine has cosmic significance, a sacrament for the whole universe. In *Crucifixion*, the cross has meta-cosmic significance. The crucified Christ reaches into dimensions that lie beyond the known universe, simultaneously a sacrifice for each and a sacrifice for All.

Some think that science and religion have different, conflicting answers to the same questions; others that they answer different questions altogether. I tell my students that there is a far more productive approach: science and religion are inspired by the same questions, but come at them from very different perspectives. In the work of Dalí, those perspectives collide. Is there more to life than that which we perceive? Yes! In the first place, the very act of perception creates a new reality. But beyond that, we are too small to see everything—space-time is fluid and melting; there are dimensions to the universe that lie beyond our grasp. At the same time, we are also too big to see everything—the ghostly emptiness of the material world, the animating quantum energy that is the very life-force of the universe. What is the nature of reality? Both physical and spiritual, abstract and concrete, mathematical and artistic, rational and irrational, the many and the One, all held together in a state of constant creative tension.

Was Salvador Dalí a purveyor of vulgar kitsch and pompous piety, an entertainer who loved nothing better than to utter mysterious, contradictory thoughts? That is certainly one perspective on the man who said this: "I believe in God but I don't have faith. I know, thanks to mathematics and science, that God must exist, but I don't believe it. It's terrible. I get closer all the time, but I don't believe."[26] From another perspective, these are the words of a mystic with a deep spiritual connection to Ultimate Reality. For Dalí the pathway to God is not the church, the sacraments, or the spiritual disciplines. The conduit to faith, to that which by definition lies beyond reason, is precisely that most rational of disciplines—science. For the man who spoke of materializing the images of his concrete irrationality, who described himself as two antithetical but completely authentic Dalís, to embrace paradox in this way was perfectly natural. To those of us who are touched by Mystery through math, science, *and* faith, it is inspirational.

26 *Arena: Salvador Dalí*, DVD, directed by Adam Low (London: BBC Arena, 1986).

# Incandescence That Hurts and Protects: Twelve and a Half Ways of Looking at Words

*Sue Sorensen*

Harrison/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

A photograph ("Keen Readers") from the Second World War shows three men browsing through the library of the bombed wreckage of a London mansion called Holland House. Debris spreads around and about the respectable, well-hatted men: charred beams, open sky, smash and ruin. But the shelves of books at Holland House are more or less intact, and the three book lovers—who must have been walking

by?—seem unaware of the incongruity of their surroundings: they are intent on the books. They cannot, it seems to me, be inmates of the house, since they are wearing hats and overcoats. But neither are they vandals, or at least not vandals in any ordinary sense. They are lovers. Lovers of books: amateurs. That is what *amateur* means, although in current usage we have lost touch with its origin: *one who loves*.

I began this personal essay with the intention of worrying about that love of books. In my present year, 2013, is the world of the book becoming less significant? Does communication in our era chiefly consist of 140-character messages in Twitter or clicking an icon that you "like" something on Facebook? I looked at the 1940 photograph and saw the world of the book as having no ceiling and great courage and promise, and I thought also of Michael Ondaatje's 1992 novel *The English Patient* where a similarly damaged library in the same war provides life-giving books to the characters. Hana reads them to Almásy, the title's patient, and the words she provides are as essential for pain relief as the morphine she, as a nurse, also provides. He has always, he says, inhaled books and felt history enter his body. She enters them in turn, "her body full of sentences and moments."[1] Both she and Almásy write their own stories in the margins of books, so that Almásy's copy of Herodotus is not only the repository of wondrous stories and ancient history, but becomes the English Patient's autobiography and confession of love. Hana even repairs the bombed house with books, using them to rebuild the stairs, letting them bear her weight and save her life. "This was the time in her life," writes Ondaatje, "that she fell upon books as the only door out of her cell" (7).

Moving on from Ondaatje, other revelatory reading moments presented themselves to my memory: Conrad, Atwood, Tennyson. Eventually I assembled thirteen writers to reflect on, although in homage to one of them, I number them as twelve and a half. I abandoned the first draft of this essay and decided to stop worrying about the future of books. This is not to say that someone ought not to be concerned, but for me this is not that time. Instead I began to consider the powerful and multifaceted ways in which words and books continue to sustain and startle us. This essay will seem, perhaps, like a series of impressions liberally scaffolded by extracts from the writers in question. Amateur that I am, I fell in love with the notion that I would record in words my word impressions. In Wallace Stevens's famous (and much parodied) poem, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," the task of collecting moments and recording perspectives is almost enough. Art happens spontaneously in the simple language of Stevens's poem; the gift of sight and knowledge is mysterious but unmistakable.

> I know noble accents
> And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
> But I know, too,
> That the blackbird is involved
> In what I know.[2]

1 Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 1992), 18, 12.

2 Wallace Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," in *Collected Poems* (New York:

Following Stevens, I gather my book moments, turn them in my hands, hold them to the light, set them down on paper, let them go.

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In Joseph Conrad's novella *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* the author records the effect of an enormous storm on the ship *Narcissus*. I read this story only once, sixteen years ago, in 1997, but I vividly recall the disorientation of Conrad's account of this storm. In a bizarre, even surreal passage of about twenty-five pages, Conrad takes the reader through the experience of a huge sailing ship heeling over in the storm and lying on its side. The sailors expect the *Narcissus* to go down, but strangely she does not. The sailors cling to the steeply sloping deck for several days, freezing and wet, without food or fresh water; they whimper, complain, pray, and one goes "off his chump."[3] At one point the narrator and a few others scramble painfully around the ship, on a mission to rescue Jimmy, the "nigger" of the title. Trapped in a position it is hard even to imagine (Conrad's language is vivid, but there is a nightmarish, malleable quality to all of this, and the shortage of precision seems completely right), Jimmy is finally surrounded by his shipmates.

> We pressed around him, bothered and dismayed; sheltering him we swung here and there in a body; and on the very brink of eternity we tottered all together with concealing and absurd gestures . . . (67)

I could not understand exactly what was happening in the scene, but I could grasp the general idea. Conrad's infamous ambiguity and abstraction work well in this book; the situation is impossible and so is Conrad's style. Note the contradictions and perplexities in the following sentences, which mark the sailors' relief when they finally get the ship upright again.

> On men reprieved by its disdainful mercy, the immortal sea confers in its justice the full privilege of desired unrest. Through the perfect wisdom of its grace they are not permitted to meditate at ease upon the complicated and acrid savour of existence. (80)

The sea is both merciful and disdainful; the men neither want (nor are able) to contemplate their renewed existence (yet they obviously do); life is both a gift and an "acrid" mess.

I read this book precisely one hundred years after its 1897 publication. In that century the era of sail had vanished and the word "nigger" had become poisonous enough that hardly anyone still reads Conrad's tale. It might be expected that such a strange book, even without the difficulty of Conrad's style, should have nothing to say to me. But that one reading—or at least those stunning pages about the great storm—has stayed with me when hundreds of other acts of reading have not. I am

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Vintage, 1990), 94.

3 Joseph Conrad, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (London: Penguin, 1963), 69.

glad to have encountered Conrad's book because although it is an uneasy reading experience, the life and death of the "nigger" Jimmy are worthy of contemplation. He is marginalized and befriended, strong man and scapegoat, existing in the midst of such tangled relationships, loyalties, and emotions that one can hardly begin to say what he "stands for." He is, then, merely (*merely?*) a human being like the rest of us.

Yet it is the boat on its side that I am, in a small way, still clinging to, trying to understand *what is up, who will save us, where is life*?

•

The Canadian literary scholar Daniel Coleman in his book *In Bed with the Word: Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics* presents, among other matters, his sense that difficult and painful reading can "nourish" us, although he does not stop there but moves from this "pleasure of devastation" to the "pleasures of confirmation and surprise."[4] His example of devastation involves reading, as a young man, Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment.*

> I shuddered at the murder, rape, and mayhem Dostoyevsky had convinced me I was capable of. I remember thinking that this awareness was terrible and wonderful at the same time. I remember thinking *Crime and Punishment* is one of the best novels I have ever read, and I hope I never have to read it again. (104)

Recently I have encountered several students who have likewise been bowled over by Dostoyevsky's remarkable novel, but the example that works better for me is Thomas Hardy. The truly devastating book, the one I hope never to read again, is *Jude the Obscure*, but *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* works in similar ways. *Tess* is a book I have taught in my Nineteenth-Century Novel course at Canadian Mennonite University, and each time I wondered whether I ought to teach it. This is not just another reading assignment; the students and I are palpably different people at the end of Hardy's novel. Suffering is involved. Most of it belongs to Tess, but some of it is felt by us. I have not always been able to manage *Tess.* In certain years I've substituted works by Elizabeth Gaskell or Charles Dickens (easier going); once only I tackled Dostoyevsksy's *The Brothers Karamazov* (not easier going). One painful aspect of reading *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as a Christian is that Hardy presents the divine forces of existence—about which he is very doubtful—as indifferent to the suffering of the good-hearted Tess. Another difficulty is being forced to abandon any naïve expectation of last-minute rescue in the unremittingly tragic momentum of Hardy's novel.

Yet the benefits of engaging with Tess in the classroom far outweigh the difficulties; this novel is one of the most worthy recipients I know of the compassionate humility counselled by Alan Jacobs in his study *A Theology of Reading: The*

4 Daniel Coleman, *In Bed with the Word: Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics* (Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press, 2009), 102–103.

*Hermeneutics of Love*. Jacobs says that in reading we, of course, "test" the works we read but, importantly, "such testing will be nothing more or less than sin if we do not simultaneously offer up our own spirits to be tested."[5] My students at CMU instinctively caught on to the need to read Hardy's remarkable characters lovingly and sympathetically; more than usual, with *Tess* they were visibly active in search of any and all possible redemptions. I was a little surprised by my students' fervent need to extend loving attention to Tess, but I was even more surprised by the way several of them insisted on feeling sympathy for the novel's villain, Alec.

There is a heartbreaking scene in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in which Tess confesses in a letter to her betrothed that she has borne a child out of wedlock. The child is dead. (Although Hardy is evasive about this incident, my students generally decide that the conception of the child should be described not as seduction, but rape. One of the novel's most sorrowful aspects is watching Tess carry the weight of an unwarranted sexual shame.) Just before Tess is to marry the deceptively named Angel Clare, she slips the letter under his door. When he emerges the next morning in high spirits, ready to marry her with pleasure, she assumes he has absorbed her story and does not hold her past against her. But the message never reached Angel: Tess later determines that the letter, hidden under a rug, was unread.

So often the essential messages we send go astray. They are misread, misinterpreted. Gerard Manley Hopkins writes bitterly about this in his 1885 poem "I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day." Midway through this sonnet, one of the poems he described as "written in blood,"[6] Hopkins writes: "And my lament / Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent / To dearest him that lives alas! away." The recipient of Hopkins's letters is, likely, God, since the latter part of the poem laments that "God's most deep decree / Bitter would have me taste."[7] Many of Hopkins's poems are howls of sorrow and pain. It is hard to conceive of a writer more inventive, more alive to the wonder of language; yet that ingenuity could not stave off the anguish that would make him cry out, in the same poem, "I am gall, I am heartburn" (1555).

In a different way, in a different century, words seem to have failed Carolyn Heilbrun. A prolific author of academic books with a sly second career as mystery novelist Amanda Cross, Heilbrun was the first woman to receive tenure in the English Department of Columbia University. She taught there for over thirty years, did groundbreaking work in feminist studies, was president of the Modern Language Association, and was especially devoted to promoting understanding of Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group. She married, had children. In 2003,

5 Alan Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001), 33.

6 Quoted in Frederick Buechner, *Speak What We Feel (Not What We Ought to Say): Four Who Wrote in Blood* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2001), 25.

7 Gerard Manley Hopkins, "I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day," in *Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume E: The Victorian Age*. 9th ed., ed. Catherine Robson and Carol T. Christ (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 1555.

when she was seventy-seven, she committed suicide. The reports stated that she was not ill. Her husband was still alive. She must have loved writing, as she produced nearly thirty books, yet she decided that she could not go on living. I cannot speculate about Heilbrun's reasons (see the article by Vanessa Grigoriadis regarding the bafflement of her friends and family[8]) but I also cannot help comparing her decision to the one Alfred, Lord Tennyson made in 1833.

It was that year that Tennyson's close friend Arthur Henry Hallam died. Both men were clever and ambitious; Hallam's death as a very young man shook Tennyson to his core. He began to doubt. His despair was personal, religious, and intellectual, sometimes expanding to include anxiety about the entire cosmos. What is the purpose of the human being in a universe "red in tooth and claw" *(In Memoriam* 56)? In Tennyson's poetry about Hallam you can hear the aching grief of widowhood:

> He is not here; but far away
> The noise of life begins again,
> And ghastly through the drizzling rain
> On the bald street breaks the blank day.[9]

That last line presents to our ears the discord of Tennyson's mind. He was nearly always a mellifluous, melodic poet, but "bald street" and "blank day" are harsh, with cold consonants linked only by brokenness.

The decision that Tennyson made after Hallam's death was to write memorial stanzas to him. He worked on this long multi-layered poem, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, for the next seventeen years, finally publishing its 133 sections in 1850. The poem created a sensation, made Tennyson the most famous poet of his century, and comforted Queen Victoria in her deep grief on the death of Prince Albert in 1861. More importantly for our present contemplation, the poem was Tennyson's very writerly way through grief. *In Memoriam* neither allows escape from grief nor easy answers, although after a number of years Tennyson's open wound became susceptible to healing and he found some peace. In section five he directly addresses the function of words in his project of mourning.

> I sometimes hold it half a sin
> To put in words the grief I feel;
> For words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the Soul within.
>
> But, for the unquiet heart and brain
> A use in measured language lies;
> The sad mechanic exercise,

8 Vanessa Grigoriadis, "A Death of One's Own: Carolyn Heilbrun," in *New York Magazine* (December 8, 2003).

9 Alfred Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.,* in *Tennyson's Poetry, e*d. Robert W. Hill (New York: Norton, 1971), 119–195, Section 7.

Like dull narcotics, numbing pain

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more.

That "outline" of course is thousands of lines in length and one of the most beautiful meditations ever written on love, longing, sorrow, and faith. Tennyson's decision to wrap himself in words like mourning clothes, to use "measured language" to soothe his "unquiet heart and brain," was the right one. One might interject here with a reminder of the long tradition of the elegy; was Tennyson's project much different? Yes, at least in scope: *In Memoriam* is grand and momentous, the poet's commitment remarkable. For years, however, I regarded the poem with vaguely fond respect, largely thinking about its significance for people of the nineteenth century, who loved it dearly.

This winter in a British literature survey course, I read aloud to my students the hymn-like opening line of the "prologue" of *In Memoriam* ("Strong Son of God, immortal Love") and knew suddenly the poem was different. It was breathing; I could distinctly feel its pulse. I think the students felt it too.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou.
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

The lovely melancholy of the rest of the poem gives way in the prologue to a willingness to lean on God as a friend, to offer to God the restless cries of the bereaved and doubtful soul. I use the strange construction "gives way in the prologue" because the prologue was the last poem to be written, and its devotional language is quite surprising, given Tennyson's frankly expressed faltering belief in the stanzas composed earlier. The verses were more affecting than I had previously known them; I experienced a moment of illumination, kinship. Religious illumination arriving via Tennyson is, in retrospect, a rather rich bit of comedy. Tennyson, the arch-Victorian, so beloved of the establishment, has never been a favourite of mine; religious nourishment arising from his poems felt to me unlikely because Tennyson's own tendency—although it varied—is usually seen as some species of agnosticism.

I have held for years the opinion that agnostics write the most moving religious poetry. In reading Tennyson's lines "Be near me when my light is low" (*In Memoriam* 50), we should ask: to whom is Tennyson's plea directed? God? We cannot say. But it is the most beautiful section of the poem, and possibly the most religious.

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In her famous long essay *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf makes use of a specific word to describe the best kind of writing: *incandescent*. She uses her favoured term to describe only two authors, Jane Austen and (even more manifestly) William Shakespeare. What she admires about Shakespeare is the manner in which "poetry flows from him free and unimpeded. If ever a human being got his work expressed completely, it was Shakespeare." For Woolf, the fully creative literary mind must have "no obstacle in it," and, intriguingly, all "foreign matter" in that mind must be utterly consumed, as if by fire.[10] In chapter five she plays with further meanings of incandescence, including "undivided" and even "androgynous."

Although Woolf is speaking here of the writer, not the reader, I see the usefulness of a similar designation for the best readerly processes. Should not the best reading be unimpeded and undivided, wholly absorbing and absorbed? But then I see myself about to make one of those overly idealistic statements about books, and I hesitate. To be "incandescent" is to glow with light and heat, yes, but one overlooks at one's peril the high temperatures involved. One can, horribly, "turn and burn" like the speaker in Sylvia Plath's poem "Lady Lazarus," until all that is left is "Ash, ash – / You poke and stir. / Flesh, bone, there is nothing there –".[11] Even if the glow is a good and warming one, think of the fragility of a filament of carbon or tungsten. A filament is a thread; it is a "minute fibre" and "tenuous," the OED tells me. And if the incandescent light bulb is the mental picture we arrive at when we think of Woolf's conception, we know these days (don't we?) how inefficient this source of light is. Wasted energy is what may occur to us when we encounter the term "incandescence." I briefly return to the worrisome land of ruin, sketched in my first pages, to a shoddy contemporary landscape where authentic reading is in danger of abandonment. This is one worry, but for others, a more pressing postmodern concern is the arbitrary and constructed nature of language. If there is truth in Ferdinand de Saussure's theory (from the 1916 *Course in General Linguistics*) that there is no reason that the word "tree" has become associated with the signified object *tree*, conceive of the resultant anxiety for those who need language to be stable, trustworthy, even holy.

A. S. Byatt is a help here. In my PhD dissertation "Verbal and Visual Language and the Question of Faith in the Fiction of A. S. Byatt," I was intrigued (and comforted) by Byatt's insistence on looking directly and openly at theories of language descending from Saussure's while simultaneously adopting an optimism that language can still fruitfully engage with truth. As I wrote then, Byatt accepts "that there is no exact correspondence between thing and word, there is no certainty about the human relation to eternity. But it is possible, she and the majority of her

10 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2001), 69.

11 Sylvia Plath, "Lady Lazarus," in *Collected Poems,* ed. Ted Hughes (London, UK: Faber, 1981), 246.

characters tell us over and over, *to accurately see* and *to accurately name*. The sight and the naming may not be permanent or perfect or universal, but there is powerful possibility nevertheless."[12]

One of the treasured moments of my PhD research arrived unexpectedly, when I was watching, rather dutifully, the videotape of a British television interview. It was a literary program called *Writers Talk: Ideas of Our Time*, and in 1984 Byatt and Iris Murdoch were in dialogue together before the cameras. After a rather stilted conversation, Byatt suddenly became animated:

> We live at a time when there are a great many theories about the untrustworthiness of language, the inadequacy of language and not many theories about the enormous power of it, the enormous accuracy of it, the enormous descriptive energy it has—so that you can describe a flower or a hospital room and none of your readers will see the same flower in their minds but none of them if they can read at all will not see more accurately. We seem to be slightly beleaguered by theories that try and persuade us that this is not the case, that language isn't in the world.[13]

Byatt's repetitive use of "enormous" (enormous power, accuracy, energy) indicates her faith in knowledge and language, and, as I said in another part of the thesis, she insists that "abandoning the quest to find and articulate meaning is an unjustifiable capitulation to the forces of pessimism" (17). Although I am gladdened by Byatt's emphasis on the word *enormous*, the aspect of that exchange with Murdoch which I have always remembered best is Byatt's insistence on *accuracy*.

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When John Updike died in 2009, many commentators lamented the loss of an amazing prose stylist, one who wrote with, as Adam Gopnik said, "perfect shining sentences."[14] The beauty of Updike's writing could also attract censure, most notably from influential critic James Wood. Wood accused Updike of excessive "fondness for an expensive phrase" and even "lyric kitsch."[15] Updike's contribution to the *New Yorker* after the September 11 World Trade Centre bombings worried some readers with its aestheticism; Alan Jacobs goes so far as to say Updike "was widely reviled, and rightly so I think" for this article.[16] Here is one of Updike's controversial sentences:

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12 Sue Sorensen, "Verbal and Visual Language and the Question of Faith in the Fiction of A. S. Byatt," Diss. (Vancouver: University British Columbia, 1999), 324.

13 A. S. Byatt and Iris Murdoch, "A. S. Byatt with Iris Murdoch," in *Writers Talk: Ideas of Our Time* (Northbrook, IL: Roland Collection of Films on Art, 1984).

14 Adam Gopnik, "Postscript: John Updike," in *New Yorker* (February 9 & 16, 2009): 36.

15 James Wood, *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 212.

16 Alan Jacobs, *Wayfaring: Essays Pleasant and Unpleasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 5.

> The W.T.C. had formed a pale background to our Brooklyn view of lower Manhattan, not beloved, like the stony, spired midtown thirties skyscrapers it had displaced as the city's tallest, but, with its pre-postmodern combination of unignorable immensity and architectural reticence, in some lights beautiful.[17]

He was not perfect. He indulged himself too much. But there are few enough writers with the ability to provide Updike's stunning accuracy. As an example, consider his short story "The Afterlife," which features the meticulous observation of a memorable accident. A man staying in a strange house takes a wrong turn down a nighttime hallway and finds himself falling down the stairs. The reader experiences in detail the sharp sensation of terror and weightlessness; then the man lands on his feet relatively unharmed, and comes to see this event as a kind of miracle. Another keenly rendered story is "The Dark," the account of a sleepless night suffered by a man who knows he is dying. The quality of the darkness he probes, the welcome intrusions of passing lights—these are all the plot we receive, aside from the man's visualization of being held in a giant hand, which allows him to keep panic at bay. Updike's acutely detailed account of the passing lights moving through the bedroom reaches about as far as it is possible to go in describing something as evasive as light; the man loves the "liberating assurance [of] those glowing rectangles delivered like letters through the slots in his room."[18] When the morning light arrives he sees it as

> a light unlike the others, entering not obliquely but frontally, upright, methodically, less by stealth than like a hired presence, like a fine powder very slowly exploding, scouring the white walls of their moss of illusion, polishing objects into islands. (655)

Daniel Coleman says that reading is "a wonderfully powerful process that we can take too much for granted." His contention is that "reading is a process that simultaneously *individualizes* us by placing the words on the page between us and the world and *connects* us by drawing us out of ourselves through imaginative projection toward the thoughts and experiences of others" (124, 125; italics in the original). Perhaps the problem with reading Updike, for some people, is that this dance between individualization and connection does not work because Updike's sensory apparatus is so much more developed than the average. Readers can feel repulsed by Updike's keen perceptions; he is so discerning that we experience not illumination but a sense of our own deficiency.

Those who are upset by John Updike's acuity—although I doubt they would term it thus, more likely calling it artifice or aestheticism—are, perhaps, unaccustomed to encounter strangeness when they read. They do not want their regular thought patterns interrupted with novel or surprising observations. But controlled

17 John Updike, Untitled "Talk of the Town" item in *New Yorker* (Sept 24, 2001): 28.

18 John Updike, *The Early Stories: 1953–1975* (New York: Random House, 2003), 652.

or expected readings are not readings at all. In his book *Wayfaring* Alan Jacobs describes the benefit of one genre, the personal essay, as "a reminder of how little we control our own experiences, try though we might … .I love the essay primarily because it is the genre *par excellence* of wayfaring" (xiii). He continues: "Wayfarers know in a general sense where we are headed … but we aren't altogether certain of the way" (xiv). In this unpredictability lies adventure, even the possibility of wisdom.

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The word *incandescent* recurs in my reading, this time used by Margaret Atwood in the 1995 poem "Morning in the Burned House," which concludes her collection of the same name. In the poem, the speaker presents herself as a child, eating breakfast, impossibly in a house that no longer exists. There is a troubling suggestion of disaster and death; is the poem spoken from the grave? There is also a strange sensation of joy; although "everything / in this house has long been over," the child is happy. The poem could be about the workings of memory; the aging speaker can still vividly inhabit the feeling of that child, remember with precision the details of the beloved lakeside home: "the woodstove / with its grate and sooty kettle, / every detail clear, / tin cup and rippled mirror." The final word in the poem is "incandescent," and in true Atwood fashion, it belongs to a mixed list of attributes; "incandescent" is the fourth adjective in an enigmatic catalogue that describes the flesh of this remembered child and follows "cindery," "non-existent," and "radiant."[19]

Atwood's well-known poem "Variations on the Word Love" (1981) ends in a comparable fashion.

> It's a single
> vowel in this metallic
> silence, a mouth that says
> O again and again in wonder
> and pain, a breath, a finger
> grip on a cliffside. You can
> hold on or let go.[20]

Atwood's misgivings about the word "love" sit beautifully and uncomfortably alongside her longing for the word (and the experience) to be meaningful. Ultimately she settles on a kind of skeptical faith: "This word is not enough but it will / have to do." With similar ambivalence the speaker in "Morning in the Burned House" wonders if "this is a trap or blessing, / finding myself back here." Both love and memory evoke a range of apprehensive feelings in the poet, but ultimately

19 Margaret Atwood, "Morning in the Burned House," in *Morning in the Burned House* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 1995), 126–127.

20 Margaret Atwood, "Variations on the Word Love," in *Selected Poems, 1966–1984* (Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 1990), 268–269.

she finds much to embrace. The concluding word "incandescent" hints at something otherworldly, perhaps even heavenly, in the experience of the remembered child. "Incandescent" is an unusual word for Atwood to deploy, its connotations nearly ecstatic; she is a writer known for her plain speaking and laconic tone. She persuades this big glowing word to settle on the last page of *Morning in the Burned House*, sacrificing her customary irony and terseness, and then she closes the book. Atwood gesturing toward ecstasy can sound like a hallucination.

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One Christmas I received a similarly disorienting message from an unexpected source, one that provided sacred reverberations I am still considering.

I had been teaching English for the University of Western Ontario. One year at Christmas the department chair emailed all the department members a greeting whose main content was an excerpt from a poem by W. H. Auden. The work is "For the Time Being," a suite from 1941 designated by the poet as a Christmas oratorio. This is what I remember reading, to my surprise and delight:

> Well, so that is that. Now we must dismantle the tree,
> Putting the decorations back into their cardboard boxes—
> Some have got broken—and carrying them up to the attic.
> The holly and the mistletoe must be taken down and burnt,
> And the children got ready for school. There are enough
> Left-overs to do, warmed-up, for the rest of the week—
> Not that we have much appetite, having drunk such a lot,
> Stayed up so late, attempted—quite unsuccessfully—
> To love all of our relatives, and in general
> Grossly overestimated our powers. Once again
> As in previous years we have seen the actual Vision and failed
> To do more than entertain it as an agreeable
> Possibility, once again we have sent Him away,
> Begging though to remain His disobedient servant,
> The promising child who cannot keep His word for long.[21]

Such thrilled confusion I felt, receiving a profoundly religious meditation from a very secular place. More important in my memory is the sacred melancholy I could hear in Auden's distinctive voice, a melancholy that was exactly right for me in that Christmas season. I recall that I quickly planned a retreat from my housemates so I could fling myself face down on my bed with Auden's *Collected Poems* and then read (not without effort) the fifty dense pages of "For the Time Being."

It is so rare, even as an English professor, to receive an unlooked-for gift of difficult language. I love the courage with which Auden describes the banal failures and disappointments of the Christmas season, and I even love the thorny manner he insists upon to describe these failures. One must work hard in reading "For the

21 W. H. Auden, "For the Time Being" in *Collected Poems.,* ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Vintage, 1991), 399.

Time Being," and this is a welcome change from the cloying sentiment and intellectual laziness of the usual Christmas fare. Auden is particularly good at the startling juxtaposition of monotony and rapture.

> In the meantime
> There are bills to be paid, machines to keep in repair,
> Irregular verbs to learn, the Time Being to redeem
> From insignificance. (400)

In Auden's account, on the heels of our human failure come the Vision and the redemption, overlapping with the failure just slightly, the glory slipping out of sight due to our carelessness, our negligence. My favourite line in the excerpt I received is "once again we have sent Him away," seven simple words which cut to the heart of human weakness. Everything God has done for me and everything I have failed to do in response is precisely delineated by Auden. The words were aimed at me, intended for me. (Everyone, I suppose, has such impressions of being the aim of a message. That does not make the experience any less profound.) That Auden knew my sense of failure and likewise knew that I could nevertheless attempt to redeem from insignificance the significantly capitalized "Time Being"—God's Time, Holy Time, which is All Time—Auden's confidence in me is a feeling I will never shake. More recently I was in a less spiritually fraught setting when I received a similar message. It was the T. S. Eliot International Summer School at the University of London. Given Eliot's status as the premier Christian poet of the twentieth century, I did not expect anyone in attendance to be overly cautious about Eliot's faith. It turned out that they were not suspicious of Eliot's religious ideas, but they were not overly interested either. The conversations in seminars were desultory, and as the week went on, I realized that the best thing about this School was likely to be Eliot himself. I took the opportunity to read in solitude *Four Quartets* as closely as I could, and I was fortunate to hear some revealing readings of these poems.

These readings were not just nice bits of theatre to wind down our days. In mere reading out loud (what an inadequate phrase—*sheer reading? pure reading?*), Eliot's poetry manifested itself in all its vividness. One afternoon on site at Little Gidding, poets Paul Muldoon and Bernard O'Donoghue read in its entirety "Little Gidding" from *Four Quartets*, from its rather mystifying beginning ("Midwinter spring is its own season / Sempiternal though sodden toward sundown"[22] ) to its famous end 259 lines later.

> And all shall be well and
> All manner of thing shall be well
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded
> Into the crowned knot of fire
> And the fire and the rose are one. (223)

22 T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," in *Collected Poems, 1909–1962* (London, UK: Faber, 1963), 214.

I just used the word "vividness" to describe Eliot, and perhaps that is not the word one expects for this intellectually rigorous, sombre poet. But if one allows Eliot to sing, he sings as well as or better than the next fellow. He sings of our need to travel toward deliverance and hope; with the reiterated phrase "If you came this way" he teases us onward, urging us toward "the route you would be likely to take / From the place you would be likely to come from" (214). He can sing conceptually, abstractly: "A people without history / Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern / Of timeless moments" (222). Or he can be grounded in simple, tangible language.

> The voice of the hidden waterfall
> And the children in the apple-tree
> Not known, because not looked for
> But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
> Between two waves of the sea. (222)

Listening and reading at Little Gidding, a venerable old religious community, once in ruin but now again with a restored chapel and a stately and holy atmosphere, Eliot's words sounded much more hopeful than I had heard them before. In the past, I had caught glimpses of Eliot's conviction in amongst the dread, but this time the gloom and the faith were more closely in step. They have to remain in step, or Eliot is not Eliot, but unless one reads him carefully, the darkness can seem to intervene too often. This time I heard the hopefulness even in his treatment of death and suffering.

> And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
> They can tell you, being dead: the communication
> Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
> (215)

It might seem that I am offering a discourse on poetry and the geographical place it springs from, and I am not, although there is no harm at all in spending time where poets have worked before you. "Little Gidding" was written in 1942 and could be full of despair. On the contrary, it is probably the loveliest thing T. S. Eliot ever wrote. And it is only words. But words of fire and light, words that hurt and pull you upright again, words that might make life bearable again for a while. Sometimes I think that is why I read: so that existence might become bearable again for a while.

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This week I finished the latest book by British novelist Julian Barnes, a writer whose finely tuned sensibilities I have always admired, even though the subjects of his books have not necessarily interested me as much as the prose itself. The new book is *Levels of Life* and is, in part, a personal essay on grieving. Barnes's wife, Pat Kavanagh, died in 2008. In attempting to write accurately about this loss, he says this:

> You put together two people who have not been put together before. Sometimes it is like that first attempt to harness a hydrogen balloon to a fire balloon: do you prefer crash and burn, or burn and crash? But sometimes it works, and something new is made, and the world is changed. Then, at some point, sooner or later, for this reason or that, one of them is taken away. And what is taken away is greater than the sum of what was there. This may not be mathematically possible; but it is emotionally possible.[23]

In coping with his wife's death, Barnes comes to hate euphemism, to hate the way people are afraid to say his wife's name. "[O]nly the old words would do: death, grief, sorrow, sadness, heartbreak" (71). After three years of widowhood, Barnes runs into his former postman, with whom he always spoke French.

> "*Madame est morte*," I found myself saying, and as I explained, and dealt with his shock, I was thinking, even as I was speaking: now I'm having to do it all again *in French*. A completely new pain. (105)

The title of my essay is a tribute not only to the famous poem by Wallace Stevens mentioned earlier, but also to a favourite book by Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters,* a postmodern caprice, a tour-de-force of shifting genres and subjects. His cunning half-chapter is called "Parenthesis," and it is about love. One assumes that Julian Barnes was writing about Pat also in 1989. He asserts, "We must be precise with love, its language and its gestures. If it is to save us, we must look at it as clearly as we should learn to look at death."[24] But as "Parenthesis" goes on he realizes that he can largely describe love by what it is not. Barnes cannot tell the readers whether they are in love or not, or what love is *for*. "But," he says, "I can tell you why to love. Because the history of the world, which only stops at the half-house of love to bulldoze it into rubble, is ridiculous without it" (238).

The best writing is often, evidently, about subjects that are recalcitrant, futile: the writing that attempts to get at things which refuse to be contained in language. Love, death, God: these are the impossibilities. These are also what most sonnets are about, what most great literature ends up trying to consider. Language fails us, or we fail language, over and over. We push a letter under the door and it misses its recipient entirely. We write and write, like Gerard Manley Hopkins and Carolyn Heilbrun, and our words fail to locate the true source of the pain or the genuine character of the weariness, neglect to recommend a solution. If writing at its best aims at incandescence, as Margaret Atwood and Virginia Woolf suggest, we recognize that incandescence is not always a straightforward thing. It can be too hot, too bright; John Updike's prose can be, for some palates, too lucid, too fine.

But the ship on its side in Conrad's novel, the resonant grieving in Tennyson's poem—these override for me the dangers and inadequacies of words. They bring

23 Julian Barnes, *Levels of Life* (Toronto, ON: Random House, 2013), 67.

24 Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 228–229.

readers up against an experience and if all goes as it should, the experience actually pierces our flesh and enters our hearts. It may stay or it may form an untidy exit wound in our backs. The marks that such words make within or outside are the marks which protect like inoculations, warm like fur, hurt intermittently like old injuries.

If I have a complaint about the way we interact with words in this era, it is that we are not allowing them to hurt and protect us in the fullness of their possibility. We need the complicated and the resilient full forces of language. Reading is not a leisure activity; it is a transmission of grief and joy. It could be a path to redemption.

### *Note*

The twelve and a half writers of my title are Michael Ondaatje, Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Carolyn Heilbrun, Alfred Tennyson, Virginia Woolf, A. S. Byatt, John Updike, Margaret Atwood, W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, and Julian Barnes. The critics Daniel Coleman, James Wood, and Alan Jacobs are important but not counted in my scheme. Other writers are, of course, mentioned in my essay; I invoke the malleable form of the personal essay as my apology for any inconsistencies.

It is usual to provide line numbers when quoting poetry; this has not always been practical, and to be consistent I have not used line numbers at all. In citing *In Memoriam*, section numbers have been cited; for other poems page numbers have been provided.

# *Musica* as Wholeness: The Numinous in Music

*Dietrich Bartel*

Music as an academic discipline and as a form of artistic expression and performance has traditionally enjoyed a privileged place in the curriculum and life of Christian schools and universities. From worship bands to men's and boys' choirs, from the monastic daily office to charismatic praise and worship, the music practiced in college chapel life reflects not only the eclectic variety of music encountered in the wider Christian church, but also reflects the diversity of theological thought on the topic of music, be this specifically liturgical music, or music in general. Music, as it is commonly understood, is a form of human expression which seems to be as natural to humans as the act of breathing. While the plethora of different musics around the globe and through the ages reflects an indescribably rich variety of traditions, the phenomenon of music as a form of human expression seems to be universal. And the use of music in worship, be the worship Christian or otherwise, is virtually as ubiquitous as the universal human practice of musical expression. Why is it that peoples around the world and throughout history have employed musical expression as a medium to worship the numinous? What is it about music that has led to the consideration of music as a fitting medium to address and respond to the divine? Is the divine revealed through music? These are questions which have been pondered and interrogated by theologians, philosophers, and music theorists for centuries.

Teaching music history and church music courses at a Mennonite undergraduate school for many years has provided me with numerous opportunities to work at some of these questions together with colleagues in various disciplines, including theology. It seems to me particularly appropriate in this volume of essays dedicated to Gerald Gerbrandt, to address some of these questions, reflecting the many

conversations we have had on the topic of music, theology, and matters concerning music in and of the church. These conversations along with countless ones with other colleagues have helped shape my views on music as it relates to theological concerns and issues, providing an alternative foundation to secular worldviews so commonly encountered in contemporary discussions of the philosophy of music.

When asking undergraduate students for their definitions of music, first responses quickly focus on issues concerning the impact of music: music's power to express emotions and feelings, its influence on the human psyche and body, its power to heal and to comfort, its invitation to cry or to dance. Questions concerning acoustics and the physics of sound, data concerning composers and compositions, and matters concerning syntax and form register much further down the list of significant musical issues. Yet undergraduate music programs normally focus on this latter list, frequently completely ignoring the deeper philosophical, ethical, cultural, and spiritual questions which are foremost in the minds of most students. The academic study of music, and thereby the university music curriculum, has become determined by the aesthetics and values of modernity, with its emphasis on music understood as an autonomous commodity, created in the image of its genius composer, with a composition deemed fully comprehensible if only enough data concerning its construction and the circumstances of its creation, including all the available data on the composer and his intentions, were to be gathered and understood. However, ancient legacies suggest a very different approach to contemplating music, one which focuses not so much on the musical product, but on that to which the music points. One of the joys of teaching an introductory chronologically organized undergraduate music history course is to be able to begin by discussing the music of ancient Greece, where precisely the ethical, spiritual, and philosophical questions concerning music are of primary concern, questions which have been interrogated by every generation of musicians, philosophers, and theologians since antiquity.

At what point and for what reason did these questions move from being the central questions to being apparently peripheral ones? To begin to address this, this essay will explore the search for the numinous in music, focusing on the legacy of Augustine's adoption of Pythagorean theories of music, particularly the concept of the music of the spheres as transmitted through Greek and Roman philosophers. It will examine Augustine's new understanding of music, now shaped and transformed through Christian thought and experience, and will follow a few strands of thought regarding music as an expression of the numinous to the beginnings of modernity, including the Babel-like attempt to replace the divine breath with human aspiration. And it will suggest a reimagining of the idea of the *musica* of the spheres in the context of an undergraduate music program.

Augustine's understanding of music was shaped by Pythagorean and Neoplatonic concepts of the discipline, which assume number rather than audible pitch or rhythm as the fundamental musical building block. Pythagoras was credited to have discovered the numeric proportions that determine the musical intervals,

which can be demonstrated by assigning pitches to various lengths of a vibrating string. Proceeding from the unison, or the pitch of the entire string, the octave results by dividing the string into two equal lengths, exhibiting the ratio of 1:2, and the fifth results by dividing the string into three equal lengths, with the ratio of 2:3 being established by comparing the octave (1:2) to the fifth (1:3). From these two ratios, all musical intervals could be determined and identified by proceeding from one fifth to the next, going through the entire cycle of the twelve diatonic and chromatic notes, even though slight adjustments (a process known as tempering) needed to be made to arrive back at the unison. The Pythagoreans held that similar numeric proportions lay at the heart of both physical and spiritual realms. Harmonic relationships were therefore considered fundamentally mathematical, with pitch and rhythm being merely audible witnesses to harmonious relationships and the mathematical concept of music. This view is echoed in Plato's *Republic*, where astronomy and music are linked as sister disciplines: "We may venture to suppose, that as the eyes are framed for astronomy so the ears are framed, for the movements of harmony; and these are in some sort kindred sciences, as the Pythagoreans affirm and we admit."[1] All physical and spiritual realities and truths were believed to be manifested, sensed, and understood rationally through numerical ratios and relationships. The discipline of *musica* was therefore understandably assigned to the *quadrivium*, the group of the four mathematical disciplines of the seven liberal arts which included geometry and arithmetic, in addition to music and astronomy. The remaining three linguistic disciplines of the *trivium* included rhetoric, grammar, and dialectic. Not until the fifteenth century would music begin to align itself with rhetoric, becoming a discipline concerned more with the art of communication than with the science of cosmology.

Manlius Boethius's summary of Greek music theory as transmitted through his *De Institutione Musica* became the primary source and authority on music in Western Europe well into the Renaissance. This Roman and early Christian philosopher, who worked at the court of the Ostrogothic King Theoderic in Ravenna in the early sixth century, brought together Greek and Roman theories and concepts of music in the five books of his music treatise, setting a neo-Pythagorean course for music theory for centuries to come. Referencing Pythagoras throughout the work, Boethius confirms the importance of number in understanding music: music is about proportions and ratios, numeric relationships which are manifested in the movements of the planets, the connections between the body and the soul, and the relationships of audible musical intervals. He identifies these three species of music, implied but not clearly identified by the Greeks, as *musica mundana, musica humana,* and *musica instrumentalis*. *Musica mundana*, the most elevated species of music, concerns itself with celestial harmony, the unheard music of the universe brought forth by the motions of the celestial spheres; *musica humana* concerns it-

1 Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vols. 5 and 6, trans. Paul Shorey, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press Ltd, 1969), VII. 530.

self with the harmonious relationship uniting the body and the soul, a conjunction of the rational and the irrational, bringing together incorporeal reason with the physicality of the human body; *musica instrumentalis*, the least significant species of music, concerns itself with audible sound as produced by vibrating strings, by breath, or by percussive action. All three species of *musica* are united by their manifestation of common numeric relationships: the same ratios and proportions which are found in audible musical intervals, such as the octave, the fifth, the third, etc., lie at the heart of a harmonious relationship of the body and the soul, and govern the motion of the celestial spheres. Concluding the first chapter of Book I, Boethius states: "From all these accounts, it appears beyond doubt that *musica* is so naturally united with us that we cannot be free from it even if we so desired. For this reason, the power of intellect ought to be summoned, so that this art, innate through nature, may also be mastered, comprehended through knowledge."[2] Because *musica*, understood as harmonic relationships as expressed through mathematical ratios and proportions, is innate to the universe and to humanity, Boethius maintains that the reasoned study of *musica* in all of its manifestations is necessary for true learning, for the comprehension of the universe and humanity's relationship to it.

In all three species the relationship between a microcosmic reflection of a macrocosmic reality becomes evident. While *musica mundana* is essentially a rational explanation of the macrocosm, presented through numerical proportions, *musica humana* is influenced by and reflective of the macrocosmic order of *musica mundana*. As such, the human body represents a microcosm of the larger order. Both are governed by the same numerical proportions and relationships. *Musica instrumentalis* is determined by the same proportions which govern *musica mundana* and *musica humana*. The distinguishing feature between the two higher orders and the applied order lies in the fact that the former exist *a priori* while the latter is the result of human fabrication, using either musical instruments or the human voice. With Neoplatonic thought placing more confidence in intellectual *ratio* than in the emotional and consequently fallible *sensus*, mathematical *ratio* was to correct aural *sensus*. With mathematical proportions determined through *ratio*, the music theorist (*musicus*) was considered superior to the practical musician or composer (*cantor*). *Musica instrumentalis* was regarded as a rational exercise rather than a creative or expressive act, with instruments being tools which allowed scientific observation and practical application.

Like Boethius, Augustine's understanding of *musica* is rooted in the Pythagorean concept of the discipline. However, unlike Boethius, Augustine spends little time in his *De Musica* discussing the mathematical properties of sound, but focuses instead on harmonious and well-measured relationships from a theological perspective. Indeed, Augustine's discussion of the properties of sound

2 Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, trans. Calvin M. Bower, ed. Claude V. Palisca (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 8.

focuses primarily on rhythm and its mathematical relationships, and not on melody and musical intervals. Common to Augustine and Boethius and generations of music theorists (as well as theologians and philosophers, poets, and playwrights) following them is the adoption of this understanding of *musica*, a concept of the discipline which focuses primarily on harmonious relationships as expressed mathematically, and secondarily on acoustic phenomena as expressed in sound. A failure to clearly distinguish between this twofold "musical" world, between the divine harmony of the Trinity and the earthly harmony of acoustics, can lead to significant misunderstandings of Medieval and Renaissance authors. Augustine, for example, had the highest regard for the discipline of *musica*, even though he appears at times suspicious of the acoustic craft of music. In discussing the views and positions held by such authors on the musical discipline, a distinction between *musica* and music seems prudent and helpful.

Augustine began writing his *De Musica* shortly after his baptism, as one of a series of projected treatises on the liberal arts, each of which was to be a reinterpretation of the discipline from a Christian perspective. Like all educated Christians of the time, Augustine was classically educated in the tradition of the liberal arts and brought these preconceptions and prior understandings to bear on his project of reinterpreting the discipline of *musica*. Like the Greek and Roman philosophers preceding him, Augustine is concerned with questions relating to the nature of reality, the soul, good and evil, the beautiful, the good life, and the ultimate good. While the questions and the language remain similar, the answers are now radically different, shaped by Christian revelation, tradition, and Scripture.

In keeping with Pythagorean thought, Augustine argues that the coherence and unity of creation can be appreciated through a study of the fixed ratios of numbers, in that the *numerositas* or "numberliness" of music reveals the harmony and unity of the created universe. A study of *musica*, particularly the numerical proportions exhibited through music, would allow a sense of a divinely arranged good order and provide a pattern for a well ordered, godly life, leading to his definition of *musica* as a *scientia bene modulandi*, a science or study of measuring well. In this definition (leaning on Varro), *bene* is to be understood more ethically than aesthetically, in keeping with Pythagorean and Platonic thought. *Musica* as a science is an intellectual and rational undertaking, unlike the sensual appreciation and practice of music. While Pythagoreans maintained that the sound of music was capable of affecting one's ethical state by communicating the order and unity of the cosmos to the soul through sensed numeric proportions, Augustine's Neoplatonic framework made him suspicious of sensual perception. He could not accept allowing corporeal bodily senses to have influence over the incorporeal and divinely inspired soul, which by definition was superior to the corporeal. It is the immortal *numerositas* of the soul which guides the perception of the senses, rather than the transient *numerositas* of sensed sound. It is *musica* which determines what is well measured, including what is good music.

Augustine's "basic, but revolutionary, insight is that God *is* music [*musica*], he *is* supreme measure, number, relation, harmony, unity, and equality."[3]

In accordance with Neoplatonic thought, Augustine's concern includes encouraging an ascent of the soul, a growth from the corporeal to the incorporeal, from the bodily and temporal to the spiritual and eternal. In this process the soul has a twofold purpose: to take pleasure in sensually perceived sound, and at the same time to rationally judge through reason what is sensually perceived through the body. While the soul governs both body and spirit, employing both *sensus* and *ratio*, pleasure remains a means to an end, which is the love of God, and to which end through reason only the divinely informed soul can lead the individual. Music, providing sensual pleasure and delight, is but a temporal and incomplete manifestation of *musica*, the eternal and divine source of all that is. And only through *musica* can the beauty and truth in music be discerned. It is as if *musica* extends her hand from the eternal to lift music to her true home. Without *musica*, music is lost and homeless. The soul's ascent through music is only possible if *musica* is the guide. Augustine does not reject the sensual pleasure found in music, a delight which was so significant in his conversion, and which he lauds as a practice of the church, as long as it is a means to an end, and not an end in itself. While the soul appreciates music which gives it pleasure through its beauty, order, harmony, and unity, through reason it realizes that this is not God, but simply a temporal manifestation or image of eternal beauty, order, harmony, and unity, which is ultimately *musica*, ultimately God. Augustine sees a move toward God not by rejecting and dismissing music, but by growing through it. As part of the temporal realm, we can only return to God from within it. Thus, music enjoyed appropriately does not distract the soul, but aids in its ascent, purifying, sanctifying, and ordering it to allow it to participate in divine harmony, in the love of God, in *musica*.

The ancient and medieval universe, en*chant*ed through *musica*, was to be irrevocably shaken by new ways of understanding the cosmos in the Italian Renaissance. The world of nature was increasingly understood as the beginning ground and source of knowledge, rather than as a world embedded in a supernatural cosmos. The tuning of the sky through *musica* became increasingly understood as naïve superstition. The *musica* which held the enchanted cosmos together was increasingly being questioned, while at the same time the art of music was beginning to usurp *musica*'s place. Modernity began to identify itself with this untuning of the sky, with the *Entzauberung der Welt* (disenchantment of the world), as Max Weber would put it. With the diminishing relevance of *musica mundana*, a truly absolute music, the search for a substitute absolute music and its otherworldliness would begin. "Once desacralized, the world becomes *natural* matter amenable to the interrogation and technological control of human rationality. The modernization of society is therefore its secularization. . . . Enlightenment therefore alienates

3 Carol Harrison, "Augustine and the Art of Music," in *Resonant Witness: Conversations Between Music and Theology*, ed. J. Begbie and S. Guthrie (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 31.

humanity from Eden. It divides a formerly integrated world into a fractured and godless universe."[4]

Vincenzo Galilei, father of the astronomer Galileo, was among the first to question the legitimacy of a perfectly numerically ordered cosmos. Through careful observation of the properties of musical intervals, he established that there were inconsistencies in the Pythagorean explanation of music and its relationship to the cosmos. With these experiments, music theory came to be grounded in the natural world of acoustics, rooted in physical reality. "Music became an audible *fact*, divorced from celestial *values*. From now on music was to live by sound and not by faith."[5] Not surprisingly, *musica*'s reign in the *quadrivium* was replaced by music's ascension in the *trivium*. With the silencing of *musica*, the power of music became rooted in the human voice of rhetoric.

Sensing that contemporary music no longer exhibited its magical powers as described by ancient and biblical writers, Vincenzo, along with his colleagues of the "Florentine Camerata" (composers, musicians, poets, and scholars of antiquity), proposed that composers return to a focus on the words rather than on the intricacies of counterpoint, thereby hoping to resurrect the storied past of music's mighty powers, but no longer differentiating between music and *musica*. The answer, it was suggested, was a new musical style, reviving the ancient Greek idea of a union of music and drama. Opera would be the saviour of music, specifically in the person of Orfeo, son of the god Apollo, who, empowered by the muse of music, would conquer even the power of death and descend to Pluto's realm to retrieve his most cherished Euridice. What Galilei overlooked, however, was that *musica* had already conquered death to bring life and wellness to her cherished creation. *Musica* was far more than one of Apollo's muses. Rather, she *is* divine wellness and wholeness, the harmony of the Trinity and the universe.

Not all discussions of music at the beginnings of modernity were as eager to discard the assumptions of Pythagoras, Plato, and Augustine. Throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, German Lutheran music theorists persisted in their attempt to view the traditionally held understanding of *musica* and the growing empirical findings of the acoustics of music as a unified whole. Rather than dethroning *musica*, the project was to have *musica* and music share the throne with equal power. One of the last theorists to espouse this position was Andreas Werckmeister, active as a church musician, expert on tuning temperaments, and music theorist at the end of the seventeenth century. Werckmeister maintains that hearing audible music *is* participating in a divine dialogue: "Is it not marvelous to recognize that music finds its origin in God, and that as His image, we can harmonize with God!"[6] Nonetheless, a hierarchy is still maintained, but it

4 Daniel Chua, "Music as the Mouthpiece of Theology," in *Resonant Witness*, 140f.

5 Ibid., 143.

6 Andreas Werckmeister, *Musicalische Paradoxal-Discourse* (Quedlinburg: Theodor Philipp

is rational mathematics, not divine *musica*, that is to rule over sensual music. It is mathematics that is to disclose the "natural order" of creation, calling "that natural which can be comprehended by sense and ratio . . . in accordance with God's creation and ordering of all things."[7]

The concept of divine order remained all-important to the German Baroque musician, but it reflected the increasing significance of natural rationalism in the context of the cosmologically and theologically anchored Protestant view of music. Intellectual understanding recognized order in nature (arithmetic proportions), a natural order which the musical composition was to reflect. *Ratio* was to be used to discern the power of music, to structure musical compositions, and ultimately to control the affections of the listeners. Even the untrained ear would recognize the beauty of properly composed music, for when "truth" is experienced, it is recognized as such. It was not so much the understanding of a divinely guided soul through *musica* which perceived the order of the cosmos in music, but rather the power of human intellect which was to accomplish this. Conversely, music which did not conform to the natural laws would confuse the ear and would be recognized as chaotic. The Baroque discipline of music attempted to understand and control nature and its harmonic system through this objective rationalism, encouraging the taming of nature as did Baroque gardening, painting, and architecture. Nature itself was to be controlled and harnessed to become what it has been destined to be. Artistic devices, whether in gardening or in music, were to be employed to "correct" nature herself, particularly those aspects of nature where the uncontrolled had run amuck. Humankind, with its higher rational insight, could facilitate this. The result would be ultimate truth, the very core of nature. Thus, human artful and rational improvements, reprojected upon nature, would be able to illuminate the true essence of nature, intending to realize in the end that which the Creator had originally intended according to "measure and number and weight" (The Wisdom of Solomon, 11:20). It is in this light that the Baroque concept of the affections and the musical-rhetorical structures, with their mandate to arouse and portray the passions, can best be understood and explained. For just as nature could be tamed, so too could the human temperaments and passions be controlled through orderly and well-crafted artistic devices. Werckmeister's disciple Johann Walther, close friend and cousin of J. S. Bach, takes matters a step further, claiming that "through music the individual is not only presented with his own likeness, namely that he has been harmonically created, but God is also reminded of His own divine wisdom, providing Him with pleasure."[8] At this point Augustine's ascent from music to *musica* becomes reversed, as music reminds *musica* of who she is.

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Calvisius, 1707), 28.

7 Andreas Werckmeister, *Musicae Mathematicae Hodegus Curiosus* (Quedlinburg: Theodor Philipp Calvisius, 1686), 12.

8 Johann Gottfried Walther, *Praecepta der musicalischen Composition*, ed. Peter Benary, Ms. 1708 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1955), 14.

The *numerus*-oriented concept of seventeenth-century German Baroque music underwent a fundamental transformation during the following century. In music, as in all other artistic disciplines, the equilibrium between *sensus* and *ratio* would be upset in the eighteenth century. In a *Zeitgeist* which sought to determine aesthetic principles on the basis of empirically discerned personal experience, the influential role of the speculative perception of music was increasingly called into question. While this modern approach determined the concept of music at the beginning of the Italian Baroque, resulting in an early rejection of an aesthetic based on *numerus*, the mathematically-theologically oriented understanding of music in Lutheran Germany only began to be rejected in the early eighteenth century. In 1728 Johann David Heinichen states: "Musicians of the past, we know, chose two judges in music: Reason and the Ear. . . . It wrongly classed the two judges and placed the Ear, the sovereign of music, below the rank of Reason. . . . [Present-day musicians] return to the oppressed Ear the sovereignty of its realm; . . . but otherwise, [if] Reason differs in opinion, it must serve [the Ear] with complete obedience and employ all of its skill, not for the visual appearance on paper, but to give the Ear the satisfaction of an absolute ruler."[9] The changing concept of music in Germany was unequivocally and explicitly emphasized by Johann Mattheson, who went to considerable length to discredit the speculative-mathematical concept of music: "I am therefore basically still of the same opinion, . . . namely that not a grain of musical substance can be found in arithmetic. . . . It is Nature which produces sound, including all the as yet undiscovered proportions. . . . Mathematics is like a pen, and the notes the ink, but Nature must do the writing. . . . Mathematics is only a human art; but Nature is a Divine power."[10] While still accepting a theological relevance for music theory, the mathematical explanation of music became subservient to the empirical realm of natural experience. This reorientation placed a subjective and individualistic slant on musical interpretation, consequently preparing the way for the eighteenth-century *Empfindsamkeit* aesthetic, to be followed by a search for the numinous, the sublime in nineteenth-century Romanticism. By 1788 J.S. Bach's first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, proclaimed that the "individualization of common sentiments" was to lie at the heart of a musical composition.[11] Objectivity gave way to subjectivity, mathematics to nature, science to expression, and the old order to modernity.

Modernity has understood the musical work, the composition and its performance as the centre of its musical universe, with the composer being the genius creator, creating *ex nihilo*, and with "absolute music" in the form of symphonies and chamber music, ostensibly compositions which refer to nothing but themselves

9 Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Music, Rhetoric, and the Musical-rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 17.

10 Johann Mattheson, *Vorrede*, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739), 16ff.

11 Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1788), 51.

being considered the culmination of musical creation. These assumptions have and are in most cases still driving the curricula of undergraduate music programs. However, a study of music since antiquity to the beginnings of modernity reveals a very different set of assumptions, with an "absolute music" hidden in the inaudible cosmos of the harmonic relationships of *musica*, mirrored dimly in the sound of music. What would it mean for a contemporary music curriculum to take seriously the discipline of *musica*? How might music theory and music history, music education, music ministry, and music therapy be imagined in light of this revised perspective?

Firstly, students studying music would be encouraged and nurtured to see the purpose of their particular musical activity and profession as a bringing together of *musica* and music for themselves, and preparing to do the same for and with others. Whether on the concert stage or in the music classroom, whether practicing music therapy or being employed as a church musician, every musician's first concern would be to understand their activity as a form of ministry, a vocation to reflect the divine of *musica* in their sounding music. In that way, every musical activity can become a form of evangelism, a sounding of the love of God. This is not a matter of preparing to be a church musician—theology is not taught primarily to train pastors—but rather to equip those with musical gifts to integrate the discipline of music with their faith and church life. While this can be part of a preparation for church music ministry, it is in a more general way a preparation for every musical vocation. Just as all believers are called to a common priesthood, so too are all musicians called to music ministry.

Secondly, music theory would return to asking a much more fundamental question than what is normally considered the basic curriculum of a music theory program: not so much the how, but rather the what and why of music. For centuries before the latter eighteenth century, this is precisely the point at which most music theory treatises would begin. These questions were dealt with before there was any discussion of consonance and dissonance, key signatures and note durations, of syntax and of form. This was not a question to be asked in a final semester or only in graduate programs, but was considered absolutely fundamental to any further discussion of musical matters. And as the music curriculum proceeded with questions regarding syntax and form, consonance and dissonance, a continual reference to the what and why of music would accompany the study.

Thirdly, music history would fixate less on data concerning composers and their works, but would focus on how generations in the past have understood their music, how their music sought to give expression to how they viewed their world, their joys and concerns, their relationship to each other and to the world, and the universe around them. It would not avoid asking questions of a "musical belief system," of the relationship between *musica* and music. Of at least equal interest would be precisely those products of composers' imaginations which do not stand out as exceptional "works" or "masterpieces"—precisely not a Brahms Violin Concerto or a Beethoven Symphony, but those imaginings which reflect the more com-

mon language of the time. So-called popular music would become of far greater interest, more clearly reflecting the musical world of a given population. In the past three or four decades, with the encouragement of critical theories, the field of ethnomusicology with its focus on the common musical practice of a particular ethnic group has taken this approach much more seriously than historical or systematic musicology had done, and in turn has significantly influenced approaches and methodologies of traditional musicology.

Fourthly, music education programs would take the questions asked in such music theory and music history approaches as their central concern in practicing music as music educators. While methods and techniques courses are indispensable tools in the project of education, of at least equal importance is the what and the why of that being taught. Furthermore, because the educational methods and the techniques being employed comment loudly on the perception, understanding, and the meaning of what is being taught, continual emphasis on simultaneously considering the medium and the message would be of significant concern.

And finally, music therapy with its emphasis on music and wellness in addition to music and healing would become the concern and interest of all music studies of the curriculum. Along with preparing professional music therapists, music as a practice of healing and wellness would become the vocation of every music student. A faith-based university sees its project as one which is not primarily concerned with developing skills or imparting knowledge, but is most interested in shaping the lives and minds of students. It is a matter of building and maintaining spiritual and intellectual wholeness, a matter of balance, of integration, and holistic thinking. It is a physical matter, a matter of *being well*. Wholeness integrates body, mind, and spirit, and is suspicious of compartmentalization.

Until the eighteenth century, the discipline of music in Western music culture was indivisible from the idea of a well-balanced soul. Music therapy is now formally recognized as a distinct discipline, complete with its own professional associations, standards, curricula, and philosophy. And this is both its strength and its weakness: its strength in that it is responsible for reintroducing the idea of wellness through music into the musical conversation; its weakness in that this conversation has itself been compartmentalized, ghettoized in its own sphere, and therefore in danger of not being integrated into the larger musical enterprise. And yet, because the issues with which it deals are of wide interest and significance, both in the musical world and in society at large, it has forced itself into other conversations. It is talked about in cancer patients' rehabilitation; it is used to break through the barriers of an autistic child or an Alzheimer's patient; it is evident in commercial advertising (whether or not we approve of its use); it sells popular books; it is used to legitimize and justify music education in schools; in a Swedish music therapy study it has even been shown to prolong life. Interestingly, one area in which it seems to have had limited recent impact is in church music, the field in which it should perhaps be most at home. For building and maintaining wellness through music is precisely what music ministry is about. Church music ministry is

concerned with the spiritual well-being of the congregation and its members, not about a primarily aesthetic experience. It is about shaping the life and soul of the worshipper and the worshipping community. It is about spiritual therapy. Whether they are aware of it or not, people involved in music ministry are involved in using music as a form of therapy.

The study of theology would be crucial to the project of being disciplined in a *musica*-informed music, while the various concentrations and areas of music study would be viewed not in isolation, but as part of a larger complex. One would inform the other as a matter of balance, of a holistic approach. Students preparing for music ministry would also understand themselves as doing music education and therapy; those preparing for music education would understand themselves as doing music ministry and therapy; and those preparing to be music therapists would understand themselves as doing music education and ministry. Similarly, students studying composition, performance, and musicology would understand their respective musical vocation in a similar light, just as music educators, music therapists, and music ministers are expected to be performers and academics. Each one of these concentrations, compartmentalized as they are for the sake of their focus, would concern, inform, and influence the other, focusing on music in their particular way, each glimpsing and reflecting something of *musica*.

We will continue to sing in our college chapels, and in so doing we will continue to harmonize *musica* with music. It is when music no longer listens to *musica* that true harmony is silenced. It is when the sound of music becomes louder than the *musica* of the spheres that our music becomes as noisy brass or a loud-clanging cymbal. It is when our music drowns out *musica* that God proclaims: "Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen" (Amos 5:23). Far from being an antiquated and irrelevant concept, Augustine's *musica*, the *scientia bene modulandi,* has never needed to ring louder in our ears, our bodies and our souls than at the present. For it is *musica* that brings healing and wholeness to *humana* and *mundana,* to our being, to our relationships, and to the universe.

# Slow Food: Feasting Sustainably on Scripture

*Gordon H. Matties*

## Introduction

In 1986, after McDonald's opened a restaurant beside the Spanish Steps in Rome, Carlo Petrini began a movement now called "Slow Food." The movement's manifesto declares: "We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods."[1] The manifesto continues by suggesting that human beings should rid themselves of speed and should nurture "quiet material pleasure" as "the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life." It suggests "slow, long-tasting enjoyment" as an antidote to the "frenzy for efficiency." It invites us to "rediscover the flavors and savors of regional cooking." Slow Food, it suggests, is a necessary antidote to whatever "threatens our environment and our landscapes." In fact, "Slow Food guarantees a better future."

According to the movement's statement of philosophy, the practice of "eco-gastronomy" helps us to make "connections between plate and planet."[2] Even more, it states: "Slow Food is good, clean and fair food. We believe that the food we eat should taste good; that it should be produced in a clean way that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or our health; and that food producers should receive fair compensation for their work."[3] Slow Food aims to preserve biodiversity,

1 http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/manifesto.lasso.

2 http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/philosophy.lasso.

3 Carl Honouré has documented the slow food movement in his book *In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement Is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (Toronto, ON: Knopf, 2004).

fosters localism, good flavour, and community. Carl Honouré describes all of that as "Slow Food Gospel."[4]

Slow Food is good news, gospel, for those who have lost connection with real food, real enjoyment, true communal practices of production, sharing, savouring, and feasting. In many ways, Slow Food might well be part of God's dream of "kingdom," a kind of salvation of the world that is emerging even now.

Slow Food has generated spinoffs. An internet search will lead to Slow Money, Slow Travel, Slow Cities, Slow Schools, Slow Culture, and more.[5] And a book titled *Slow Church*[6] advocates for a fresh way of cultivating community. What is at stake in all of this? It seems to me that advocates of Slow, unbeknownst to them, are drawing on the wisdom of Sabbath, a practice grounded in the habit of letting go of control, of mastery, and of productivity—in short, of securing our own well-being (Exod 20:8–11). Sabbath invites us into a way of life by which we release our compulsion to acquire more than we need (Exod 16:1–36, especially vv. 15–18).

I suggest in this essay that readers of the Bible would do well to draw on the wisdom of Slow. Too many of us have either lost patience with the Bible, or have set it aside because of its many contradictions, its violence, or because of how it has been used to oppress, colonize, marginalize, exclude, and judge those different from ourselves. Christian colleges and universities try to address those problems by incorporating a minimum number of credit hours of biblical study into their core curriculum. But even that becomes a chore for students who "have to" take these courses. Academic programs that require students to take Bible courses do well to take up Slow practices. And they will have to show why Fast (and perhaps "required") is no longer adequate.

By Fast I mean any approach to biblical study that presumes that the individual, or community of readers, will arrive at certainty and consensus if only they apply the right interpretive strategies.[7] Or that imagines that an inoculation of one year of courses or a certain number of credit hours will provide the long lost but now desperately needed biblical literacy. Or that assumes that every time they crack open the Bible (or open their Bible app) readers will receive a word from the Lord. My plea is to slow down. We may be so desperate for help that we cry with the psalmist, "Hurry, Lord!" (AT;[8] cf. Ps 38:22; 40:13; 69:17; 70:1; 71:12). And that's a fully appropriate response to the experience of God's hidden and elusive presence,

4 Ibid., 69.

5 The Slow Movement: http://www.slowmovement.com/.

6 C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2014).

7 Christian Smith's book, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2011) presents a helpful survey of the problem.

8 Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version. AT=author's translation.

or to being victimized by evil and disaster. Most often, however, the psalmists testify to having discovered the discipline of waiting (Ps 25:5; 27:14; 33:20; 37:7; 38:15; 62:1; 69:3; 130:5–6). The real need of our time, with respect to our expectations regarding the Bible, is to imagine how we might enter a space of waiting. It will not do to hone one's apologetics skills, for the Bible isn't a book that can be assessed by the metrics of modernity. It's an ancient book that requires a patient and diligent attentiveness that does not presume ahead of time what the outcome will be. The Bible will always resist self-determined certainties. The Bible's strangeness offers an invitation to embrace the virtues of patience, humility, and love with respect to the interpretive task. The virtues of Slow will make us into good readers rather than plunderers of the biblical text.

C. S. Lewis, in *An Experiment in Criticism*, explored notions of being a good reader or a bad reader. The difference, according to Lewis, is that bad readers use the book for what they want rather than for what they might receive. They "rush hastily forward to do things with the work of art instead of waiting for it to do something to them."[9] Alissa Wilkinson, applying Lewis's point to watching movies, suggests that "The bad reader's goal when approaching a book is to see what he might extract from it: an abstract principle that he can apply to his life to improve it, or a new standard by which to measure others, or a higher social standing, or just some predictable amusement. His primary love is himself. He is frustrated when a book challenges his ideas or lifestyle, when it makes him see what it's like to be someone else, when it unsettles his status quo—even if those things have the ring of truth."[10]

John Sutton Lutz, a history professor at the University of Victoria has applied Slow to the academic endeavor. He writes: "Slow scholarship is thoughtful, reflective, and the product of rumination—a kind of field testing against other ideas. It is carefully prepared, with fresh ideas, local when possible, and is best enjoyed leisurely, on one's own or as part of a dialogue around a table with friends, family and colleagues."[11] Accordingly, suggests Lutz, slow scholarship involves "reflection on the deep structures, patterns, and ideas that are the cultural foundations for the more transient and easily observed daily manifestations."[12]

Lutz's plea for reflection is nothing other than what Nietzsche called for in his 1886 book *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. It could well be that he was the first to advocate for "slow reading." By that he doesn't mean literally slow. He writes, concerning his own writing: "A book like this, a problem like this, is in

9 C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 25.

10 http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/au*gust-web-only/our-experiment-in-criticism.html?paging=off.*

11 http://web.uvic.ca/~hist66/slowScholarship/ index.php.

12 Several books have advocated for slow reading. The most recent of those is David Mikics, *Slow Reading in a Hurried Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013).

no hurry; we both, I just as much as my book, are friends of *lento*."[13] Here Nietzsche describes himself as a philologist who is "a teacher of slow reading," by which he means (in his own writing in particular) to frustrate (he says it more starkly), to "reduce to despair every sort of man who is 'in a hurry.'" What Nietzsche wants is for readers

> to go aside, to take time, to become still, to become slow—it is a goldsmith's art and connoisseurship of the *word* which has nothing but delicate, cautious work to do and achieves nothing if it does not achieve it *lento*. But for precisely this reason it is more necessary than ever today, by precisely this means does it entice and enchant us the most, in the midst of an age of "work," that is to say, of hurry, of indecent and perspiring haste, which wants to "get" everything done' at once, including every old or new book:—this art does not so easily get anything done, it teaches to read *well*, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers.[14]

The teacher of slow reading is therefore the teacher of reading as rumination upon the text, which Nietzsche likened to chewing the cud.[15] By contrast, "The worst readers are those who proceed like plundering soldiers: they pick up a few things they can use, soil and confuse the rest, and blaspheme the whole."[16] Or if there is nothing to use—the reader having become cynical on account of illusory expectations—they cast the Bible aside as irrelevant, as though relevance is somehow a guarantee of its veracity. I am suggesting that Slow and its siblings, patience, humility, and love, are the habits of heart and mind that will feed the body for a lifetime.[17]

Let me assert, however, that although Slow is rooted in convictions and practices, it is not a method. I am not interested in mastery of the biblical text or even the recovery of some ideal of biblical literacy. I simply want to advocate for patient engagement with the biblical text. I even want to advocate for a moratorium on the compulsive attempt to find solutions to the vexing problems of biblical interpretation. I present here several practical examples of such slow engagement (much like what I do in my Bible courses), not to offer a set of principles for interpretation (although I will have some such things to say at the end), nor to respond to

13 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter; trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), No. 5, 5.

14 Ibid.

15 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, 8.

16 Aphorism 137 from "Mixed Opinions and Maxims" (1879) in Walter Kaufmann, ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (Modern Library Edition; Random House, 2000), 175.

17 For an approach to slow reading as transformative reading, based on lectio divina, see K. Jo-Ann Badley and Ken Badley, "Slow Reading: Reading along Lectio Lines," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 15 no.1 (2011): 29–42.

pressing contemporary concerns, but to offer an example of the habit of paying attention, which Simone Weil calls "the very substance of prayer."[18] These are excursions whose aim is not to plunder the text but to attend to its resonances and to let those inform my sense of what it means to be human. This, I am quite sure, is the kind of Slow that characterizes Gerald Gerbrandt's practice of studying and teaching the Bible.

I suggest, in addition, that such attentiveness to the text flows from the quest for wisdom, and it yields the fruit of wisdom. Slow is the virtue required for the journey toward wisdom. I might have titled what follows "Six excursions, or how noticing something led to something else, which opened into something entirely different."

## Excursion 1

In my earliest years of formal biblical study, I took great pains with the question of who wrote the Pentateuch. For some reason it was deemed terribly important to get the facts about that right and, in particular, to ground one's theological reflection on Scripture on matters of authorship. After all, I was taught that it is the author's intention that matters most. Without giving up on authorship (all texts are authored), I've come to recognize that biblical texts have a lively history as well as an afterlife. Accessing whatever can be discovered about the prehistory of any particular text, or its shaping through time by editors, can provide important background understanding. But I've come to realize that my early study was shaped primarily by a modernist assumption that historical questions are primary, and that historical research provides more or less objective knowledge about the meaning of texts. Without dismissing the value of historical research, I've come also to recognize the value of treating texts as conversation partners with whom and through whom I might interpret my world and my experiences.

Many years ago I read a book by David Clines called *The Theme of the Pentateuch*. In those days it was all the rage to find unifying themes across a range of biblical texts. In the case of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, Clines suggested that the story as a whole is concerned primarily with the partial fulfillment (and hence also the nonfulfillment) of the divine promise to or blessing of the ancestors, which is played out through the plot of these five books in three ways: in the promise of descendants/posterity (Genesis 12–50), the promise of relationship with God (Exodus/Leviticus), and the promise of land (Numbers/Deuteronomy). Genesis 1–11 serves not only as a prologue, but as the introduction of a plot consisting both in the journey away (either escape or exile), and the longing and search "for a home that had never been a home." Clines continues: "They are the unsettled in pursuit of the unobtained."[19]

18 Simone Weil, *Waiting on God* (London: Routledge, 2010), 32. Originally published in 1951.

19 David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 118.

One might say that the Bible is everywhere a testimony to the unsettled search for home. But let's stay with Genesis for a moment and consider its odd assortment of stories. The central problem (leaving aside some of the plot complications of Genesis 3, 4, and 9) is the fact that Sarai is barren (Gen 11:30). Coming at the end of the genealogy and the beginning of the journey story (11:31), this short announcement of her childlessness echoes tragically the command of Genesis 1:28. The fruitfulness that God has blessed, and has named "very good" (Gen1:31), now becomes the central problematic of the rest of the book of Genesis. The entire book of Genesis from that point onward can be described as a tortuous journey into how the "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28) and "very good" (Gen 1:31) is taken, twisted, and manipulated rather than received, welcomed, and honoured in the loving embrace of family and stranger. The command "to the land that I will show you" (12:1) gets lost in the shuffle as Jacob and family end up as strangers/sojourners in Egypt. Overall, though, the order of the stories of Genesis suggests two things.

First, the command to "be fruitful and multiply" is realized, but not in the land of Canaan, which we presume is the land of promise. It is in "the land of Egypt" where they "were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly," as we see in the summary statements of Genesis 47:27. Exodus 1:7 takes up the theme and introduces us to another problematic, the fact that Israel is enslaved in a land not promised. All is now tangled and marred. Second, the book of Genesis ends with an even more significant allusion to Genesis 1. At the end of the book Joseph tells his brothers, "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today." A very simple observation: The word "good" echoes the sevenfold divine declaration of goodness in Genesis 1.

I love the Common English Bible translation of Joseph's words: "You planned something bad for me, but God produced something good from it." The New Living Translation adds a nuance that skews the reading by adding the word "all," as in "God intended it all for good." The best sense, I think, is what is exemplified by David Clines's two suggestions for how to make sense of Genesis 1–11: (1) "Mankind tends to destroy what God has made good"; no matter what God does to judge or to offer grace, sin continues to spread its devastation; or (2) "No matter how drastic man's sin becomes, destroying what God has made good and bringing the world to the brink of uncreation, God's grace never fails to deliver man from the consequences of his sin."[20] It seems to me that the book of Genesis as a whole, and its ending in particular, confirms that Clines's second option makes the best sense not only of Genesis 1–11, but of the book of Genesis as a whole.

I don't need to know who wrote the book of Genesis in order to make that claim about the overall theological affirmation of the book of Genesis. God is in the business of transforming, but not controlling, whatever it might be that human beings mess up. Did God make Joseph's brothers do what they did? Was it God's will that

20 Ibid., 76.

bad things happen to Joseph? No to both questions. There is no evidence in the text to suggest otherwise. God is hardly mentioned in the Joseph story except as one who has an interest in redeeming (bringing good out of) both humanly created and so-called natural disasters. The redemptive goodness motif is nothing other than the key signature for the entire Bible.

## Excursion 2

The book of Exodus complicates matters, as might be expected. The narrative begins by reminding readers not only of the Joseph story (and his death), which ends the book of Genesis, but also takes us back to Genesis 1 with the emphatic "were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied . . . the land was filled with them" (Exod 1:7; cf. Gen 1:28; 41:27). It almost makes one wonder whether Exodus is appropriating for the Israelites what was a mandate for all humankind in Genesis 1. An even more interesting question is whether the fivefold repetition of the Hebrew root *'bd* (in the verb *'abad* and the noun *'abodah*) in Exodus 1:13–14, translated as "imposing tasks . . . hard service . . . field labour" might echo the second creation story with its divine command for humankind in the garden "to till it and keep it" (2:15), where the verb *'abad* is translated "to till" (NRSV) or "*to farm it* and to take care of it" (CEB; cf. Gen 3:23; 4:2).

Tracking the use of the verb or the noun (for work/till/serve) through the first part of the book of Exodus reveals an odd juxtaposition. In chapters 3 through 10 the verb appears numerous times with two meanings. First, in the expected sense of "serve/service," or "work/labour/bondage," as we see in Exodus 1 (also 5:9, 11, 18; 6:5, 9). But the menacing tone of Pharaoh's work policy is undercut by Moses's alternative rhetoric. He uses the same words (the same Hebrew root in verb and noun form) when he asks Pharaoh to let the people go so that they may "worship" (3:12; 4:23; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1,13; 10:3, 7). Oddly, Pharaoh begins to use the word the same way when he speaks, as most translations have it, "Go, worship the LORD your God" (10:8; 12:31). The irony, of course, is that the word for "work" and "worship" is the same word in Hebrew. The story is about both the change of employers and a new kind of work.

Some years ago in my exploration of Exodus, I realized that allusion and repetition in the book of Exodus offers a key to understanding the overall vision of the book. Normally it's been said that the book of Exodus depicts God's saving act of liberating the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh represents all that's evil and that wages warfare against the sovereignty of Yahweh. Upon liberating the Israelites, God leads them out into the wilderness, where they complain bitterly, but God has mercy and gives them his laws by which they might live within the boundaries of the freedom gained by God's gracious action in the exodus and provision in the wilderness. But they rebel and make a golden calf. Still, and upon Moses's intercession, God relents from killing them all and, instead, tells them to build a moveable shrine. The law is placed into a box and off they go. There's more, however, than meets the eye. And again, endings help us out.

It's often said that God liberated the Israelites because, as God says, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain" (3:7–8, CEB). God is said to act on behalf of the oppressed. Attention to what God says elsewhere, however, suggests that God is much more self-interested. In the middle of giving instructions about building the moveable shrine (tabernacle), God says, "I will be at home among the Israelites, and I will be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I could make a home among them. I am the LORD their God" (29:45–46, CEB).[21] Not only that, but in the previous verses in Exodus 29 God says that in meeting the Israelites God's "glory" will be revealed, which is what we find taking place at the completion of the tabernacle at the end of the book of Exodus, where we read that "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (mentioned twice in 40:34–35). This is a new idea. Genesis says nothing about God's glory, yet in Exodus 33:19 God says that God's "goodness" will pass before Moses. What's going on? Is there here a connection between the "goodness" of Genesis 1 and the "glory" of Exodus?

Let's return to the motif of work/labour/service/worship that we see throughout the first chapters of Exodus. It's not surprising that the motif should be prominent in the Sabbath commandment (Exod 20:8–11). But there we find a different word for work, one that we also find in Genesis 2:2–3 (I'll have more to say about that in a moment). Humankind is told that work ought not define human life in such a way as to detract from recognizing that all of life is a gift from God. One cannot sustain, manage, manufacture, or secure one's life or one's economic well-being. Moreover, human rest is to be in imitation of God's rest, who ceased from his work after six days of "making." This insistence on not working recurs in Exodus more than any other divine instruction. We find it in 23:12, where relief and refreshment are the intended outcome. The same motifs recur in 31:17 in a passage that reiterates the Sabbath law in more detail (31:12–17). Most remarkably, the Sabbath law appears again in 35:2. These two occurrences of Sabbath laws frame the famous golden calf episode of chapters 32–34, which serves as a context for two revelations to Moses. Although God vows to destroy the people (32:10), Moses intervenes and God "changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people" (32:14). Then God tells Moses to leave Sinai, but that God will not accompany them (33:3). Moses intervenes again, to which God promises to go with the people and says, "I will give you *rest*" (33:14).[22] Exodus 33 continues with the story of Moses's request to see God's glory, to which God responds by shielding Moses in a crevice and saying "you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen" (33:23). In the renewal of the covenant after the golden calf incident (or at the conclusion

21 This divine dwelling among humankind finds an echo in the Gospel of John (1:14).

22 This slight word, rest (*nwḥ*), is also the root meaning of Noah's name (*noaḥ*, Gen 5:29), where we read, in a play on words (assonance), that "this one shall bring us *relief* (*nḥm*) from our work and from the toil of our hands."

of it) there is a reiteration of laws that seem to be in the place where one would expect a restating of the Ten Commandments (34:10–26; cf. 34:4). In this list of laws, only exclusive worship of Yahweh and the prohibition of idols (34:14, 17) and the Sabbath laws (34:21) are in any way similar to the original ten found in Exodus 20. How does all this relate to the ending of Exodus?

The book of Exodus frames the liberation of the Israelites from slavery around two statements by God: first, that God sees, understands, and comes down to deliver (3:7–8); and second, that God wishes to make a home among the Israelites (29:45–46). The divine instructions that comprise much of the book of Exodus provide a communal expression of liberation (because God has liberated, therefore Israel lives within the boundaries of divine instruction, thereby assuring freedom is maintained and society ordered appropriately). The instructions regarding the tabernacle and its construction provide a way for God to dwell among the Israelites.

The last two chapters provide us with the clues for understanding not only the thrust of the Exodus story, but also its connection to the book of Genesis, and to the creation story in particular. Exodus 39:32 notes, "In this way all the work (*'abodah*) of the tabernacle . . . was finished." The same idea is repeated at the end of the chapter where the expression "all the work" is repeated twice, each time with a different Hebrew noun, each of which occurs in various places in the book of Exodus to refer to the work of the people. *'abodah* (39:42) is used most often in the early part of Exodus to refer to slave labour/worship, and *mala'kah* occurs most often in the Sabbath commandments throughout the second half of the book and in various other places, primarily from chapter 20 onward, especially referring to the work of tabernacle construction and the liturgical life of the Israelites (cf. 35:24; 36:6 where they also occur together in "the work of the service" of the tabernacle). Here, at the end of chapter 39, the narrative signals that the work of the people has effected a thorough transformation of the slave labour that characterized the work under Pharaoh's oppressive regime. The narrative as a whole is striving toward that transformation and, in doing so, reaches back to Genesis 1 and 2. There it is God who finished the work (Gen 2:1; cf. Exod 39:32). In Exodus 39:43 Moses "blessed them," just as, in Genesis we find God blessing the creation (1:22, 28). Similarly, and more strikingly, the two references to "finishing" God's work (Gen 2:1–2) are followed by God's blessing of the seventh day "because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation" (Gen 2:3). Unlike the Egyptian taskmasters who demand "Complete your work" (using the same Hebrew verb; Exod 5:13), and unlike the "cruel slavery" (*'abodah*) that results in a "broken spirit" (Exod 6:9), the work of the people in Exodus results in blessing. It is nothing other than a reiteration of God's blessing of the seventh day when God's work was completed. Now, at the end of Exodus, the people's work is done and they, too, can rest in the glory of God's presence. Exodus 40:33 reports that "Moses finished the work," upon which "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (40:34).

Genesis and Exodus are framed by work, both divine and human. In Genesis God creates a home for all God's created beings, blessing them all and sheltering

space in time for rest. In Exodus the Israelites create a home for God in their midst, fulfilling God's desire for intimacy and presence. In Genesis God redeems that which humans have destroyed (Gen 50:20), and in Exodus God acts to redeem the work of humans from the oppressive subjugation by imperial power so that they are gifted by God for a new kind of work, the work of a just society that creates a space for divine presence.

Let me be clear. Framing the stories of Genesis and Exodus in the light of these macro themes does not diminish the power of the smaller stories embedded within these two books. Rather, it illustrates that those who crafted the biblical books were placing these smaller stories inside a larger drama of divine-human interaction. For example, later biblical authors (and perhaps characters in later stories) do not naïvely assume that God literally lives inside the temple. The story of the construction and dedication of Solomon's temple clarifies the relationship between temple and divine presence. In Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8 we find Solomon saying, "But will God indeed dwell on earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built" (8:27). Isaiah, similarly, envisions God "sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple" (6:1). The Bible does not locate God in temples, although temples represent divine presence in the human liturgical imagination.

Through such imaginative transposition, in the New Testament, temple becomes identified in various ways with Jesus. John's Gospel, in particular, has Jesus *as* God's temple (John 2:19–21). Paul refers to the Jesus community as God's temple (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). In 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul even quotes God's statement in Exodus 29:45–46. And Revelation does away with temple altogether, since God's presence is unmediated (Rev 21:3, 22).

What's my overall point here? Teaching that attends, and teaches to attend to the imagination of the narrative as a whole is a work of art that takes a lifetime. Slow engagement with that story comes, over time, to shape my imagination. In particular, as in Genesis and Exodus, God lives incognito in the human world, both to transform human evil and to create the possibility of intimacy with God in a world where manipulation, violence, alienation, and oppression thrive. This is my world, and this is my God.

## Excursion 3

One of the ways we learn about how Scripture functions is to observe dynamics among texts. I've been illustrating a few ways in which specific texts in Genesis and Exodus echo one another, and how those resonances are taken up in other texts. The common term for this is intertextuality. Biblical writers, when trying to make sense of their situation, often draw on other texts as either starting points or vantage points for their own historical or theological reflection. I've already mentioned how Solomon's prayer reflects on the question of God's dwelling place. That the text of 1 Kings draws on the Exodus story is clear already in 1 Kings 8:10–11, with the references there to a "cloud" and "glory" filling "the house of the LORD"

(cf. Exod 40:34–38). Solomon at that point offers a reflection on God dwelling "in thick darkness" yet this temple is "a place for you to dwell in forever." The prayer of dedication, however, affirms not the temple, but "heaven your dwelling place" (8:30, 34, 36, 39, 43, 49). It is the "name" that dwells in the temple (Deut 12:11; 1 Kgs 8:16, 29). It could be—and here we speculate—that the author of Kings is reflecting on the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians. 1 Kings 9:6–9 provides the reason for Israel's exile and for the destruction of the temple. The question "Why?" in the mouth of the peoples (9:8) and their answer (9:9) echoes Deuteronomy's similar question in the mouth of the nations (Deut 29:24), with the answer that "The LORD uprooted them from their land . . . as is now the case" (Deut 29:28). The writer of Kings reflects after the fact, and in the process assures readers that God's dwelling place could not be destroyed since God didn't live there in any case.

Chronicles seems to cover the same historical ground as do the books of Kings. In fact, Kings is very likely one of the primary sources for the Chronicler's rewriting of Israel's history hundreds of years later. But Chronicles uses his sources in ways that suit the new situation. He does so, for example, in David's commissioning of Solomon (1 Chron 22:6–16) by drawing from source material in 1 Kings 2 (which itself is modelled after God's commissioning of Joshua in Joshua 1). But David has much more to say in 1 Chron 22. Although the pattern of 1 Kings 2 remains in place, including the echoes of Joshua 1, the Chronicler adds specific instruction regarding "building the house of the LORD your God" (22:11). The Chronicler uses the same verb "to succeed/prosper" in 22:11 and 13 as we find in Joshua 1:8. He also uses other wording from Joshua 1, but in addition to prospering being related to keeping God's instructions/law, which we find in Joshua 1 and 1 Kings 2, the Chronicler adds "succeed in building" (22:11). Then, after commissioning Solomon, David turns to Israel's leaders and tells them, "Now set your mind and heart to seek the LORD your God. Go and build the sanctuary of the LORD God" (22:19). Here is the most important motif in Chronicles in relation to the temple. Although Chronicles takes up the motif of "the name of the LORD" as residing in the temple, the real concern for the writer is Israel's response to God which the temple allows (note the overwhelming emphasis in 1 Chronicles 22–27 on the temple and its officials).

When David has another opportunity to instruct Solomon (1 Chron 28), he repeats some of the same instructions regarding keeping God's commandments (28:8). But more, he says, "If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon you forever" (28:9). The motif of seeking also occurs in David's poem in 1 Chronicles 16:10–11, a poem that illustrates how the Levites led Israel in worship, and where David highlights the blessing of seeking the LORD. The true worshiper will "Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his presence continually" (16:11).

At the end of David's commissioning of Solomon, David takes up wording from Joshua 1:7–9, using key words and phrases, but adds one significant motif: "until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished" (1 Chron 28:20).

That addition is an exact repetition of the Exodus wording, using the two words for work and the verb "finished" (Exod 39:32, 42). What becomes clear for Chronicles is that the commissioning, although drawn from Joshua's commissioning, has nothing to do with conquest and occupation of the land. The Chronicler's transposition of Joshua's wording, joined up with the motif of finishing the work from Exodus, serves his purposes very well. Chronicles is not interested in land, but in reconstituting the worshipping community in the colonial era long after the return from exile.

It is likely that Chronicles is taking up a singular occurrence of the word "seek" (used in this particular way) from Deuteronomy 4:29, which itself is a reflection on and instruction to Israel in exile, advising that in exile Israel ought to "seek the LORD your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul." Only now, back in the land (at the time of the Chronicler's writing), seeking constitutes worship at the temple. But more than that, seeking is a stance that all can embrace, as we see the motif used elsewhere in Chronicles and as it is modelled after David's own poetic reflection in 1 Chronicles 16:10–11. After David's commissioning of Solomon, the verbs for "seeking" occur again most prominently after God's second appearance to Solomon, where we find the famous lines, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron 7:14). This line is not found in 1 Kings 9, the source of 2 Chronicles 7, and, along with previous occurrences of the seeking motif, it becomes the watchword for the spirituality of Chronicles. When Rehoboam takes the throne after his father Solomon's death, the priests and Levites from "all Israel," including Jeroboam's northern kingdom, present themselves to Rehoboam. And the faithful remnant follow them, as the Chronicler describes, "Those who had set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came after them from all the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD, the God of their ancestors" (2 Chron 11:16). This sets the standard, modelled on David's poetic description of the faithful ones (1 Chron 16:10–11), in David's commissioning of Solomon (1 Chron 28:9), and in God's charge to Solomon (2 Chron 7:14). The motif continues thirteen times through the rest of 2 Chronicles (12:14; 14:4, 7; 15:2, 4, 12–13, 15; 16:12; 17:4; 19:3; 20:3–4; 22:9; 26:5; 30:19; 31:21; 34:3). Setting one's heart to seek God becomes the criterion by which the Chronicler evaluates kings. And more often than not, such seeking involves worship at the temple (as well as protecting the purity of the holy place).

I take pains to document the motif of seeking in Chronicles because it is clearly an addition to the source material in the books of Kings. No king is evaluated in the books of Kings for whether or not he "sought the LORD." In Chronicles, however, this motif becomes the criterion for faithfulness. Although 2 Chronicles 7:19–22 includes the assumption of 1 Kings 9:6–9 that the temple will be destroyed, the insertion into God's speech to Solomon at verse 14 signals a different sensitivity. Seeking the Lord implies life in the land, although not a perfect life. The example of

King Asa of Judah provides one of the most profound reflections on seeking God (2 Chron 15:2–4, 12–13, 15). Although he is described as seeking God, he does not turn to God for healing for a foot ailment (2 Chron 16:12). Although 1 Kings 15:23 mentions Asa's illness, only Chronicles notes his not turning to the LORD for healing (cf. Ahaziah in 2 Chron 22:6–7). The other king who suffers some kind of ailment is Hezekiah. In the account about him in 2 Kings, he is healed of his ailment because God has heard his prayer (2 Kgs 20:5). But in Chronicles, Hezekiah's illness isn't even mentioned until 32:24–26. The description there is sparse, mentioning only that "his heart was proud" and that "Hezekiah humbled himself." Almost everything pertaining to Hezekiah in Chronicles concerns the temple, its cleansing, restored worship, and the celebration of Passover (not in 2 Kings; 2 Chronicles 29–31). Yes, Hezekiah responds in humility, as decreed in 2 Chronicles 7:14. But that isn't the big story. 2 Chronicles 30 depicts Hezekiah's call to the people of the north (Ephraim and Manasseh, v. 1; "from Beer-sheba to Dan," v. 4) to "return to the LORD" (v. 6) and "come to his sanctuary" (v. 8). Only "a few" respond and "humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem" (v. 11). Hezekiah prays for them, "The good LORD pardon all who set their hearts to seek God . . . even though not in accordance with the sanctuary's rules of cleanness" (vv. 18b-19). The result? "The LORD heard Hezekiah, and healed the people." Whereas 2 Kings favours Hezekiah's healing (2 Kgs 20:1–11), Chronicles depicts Hezekiah as one just like the people, one who must "humble himself" (32:26). Chronicles isn't interested in the political intrigue around Hezekiah. Much more significant for the Chronicler is the fact that those who "humbled themselves" (30:11) came to the sanctuary (v. 8), and "set their hearts to seek God" (v. 19). This, for the Chronicler, constitutes true healing. And it comes to all the people, not only to one. Worship, for the Chronicler, is a healing act. The Chronicler writes in the aftermath of Cyrus's decree, in which the Persian emperor states, as reported in the last verses of 2 Chronicles, "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem . . . Whoever is among you of all his people . . . Let him go up" (2 Chron 36:23). There is no conquest in Chronicles; there is no emphasis on land acquisition. But worship at the temple becomes the healing of the people, the site of forgiveness, the locus of prayer, and the hope for the future.

I highlight this prominent motif in Chronicles to illustrate that through creative use of source material, sometimes adapting, sometimes changing, sometimes adding (even in speeches and prayers), the Chronicler shapes a spirituality of temple-centred, worship-oriented life in the new post-exilic community of Yahweh worshippers. This, too, suggests that biblical writers themselves are doing theology slowly, over generations, over centuries.

## Excursion 4

In my earliest years of formal biblical study I took a course in the books of Daniel and Revelation. I still have a copy of the essay I wrote. It had to do with counting

the number of actual years reflected in the symbolic numbers of years in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The purpose of the essay was to calculate, in some unfathomable way, that Jesus was about to return any minute. It turned out that the answers were all there in the writings of theologian Lewis Sperry Chafer and a few others. For some reason I wasn't familiar with Jesus's statements in the gospels "about that day and hour no one knows," not even the Son (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32), or about the way the kingdom would be coming (Luke 17:20ff.). I didn't learn one of the most interesting things about Daniel, that he and his friends were "versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans . . . for three years" (Dan 1:4–5). And that throughout this process, which might otherwise be understood as imperial indoctrination, the text tells us that "God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom," which, I presume, gave Daniel the tools by which to have "insight into all visions and dreams" (Dan 1:17). Without the imperial education, without knowledge of the language and literature, including the rich symbolism of Assyrian and Babylonian art, Daniel wouldn't have had the capacity to interpret the times.

Like Solomon, who is depicted in the books of Kings as a master (or at least a patron) of the sciences of his time (1 Kings 4:29–34), Daniel's education was understood by the biblical authors as a gift from God. Solomon, unfortunately, turns out to have been a tragic failure. Daniel, unlike Solomon, was able to discern the real issues. It wasn't the education that was the threat. For Daniel and his friends, loyalty to God alone is what needed to be discerned. In the two stories that depict what was really at stake, we discover it concerns idolatry. Daniel would not "fall down and worship" (3:6, 10, 15). Our challenge may well be similar. In the face of hot topics of our time, we do well to discern the gods as the highest of priorities rather than attend to whatever is touted as being of ultimate value (Dan 3:28; cf. Dan 6:7).

## Excursion 5

I've been intrigued by the stories about the daughters of Zelophehad for a long time. They are minor characters in the story of ancient Israel's wilderness wandering as it's presented in the book of Numbers (chapters 27 and 36). They show up again in the distribution of the land section of the book of Joshua (chapter 17). In the genealogies of Chronicles, Zelophehad appears once, along with a note that he had only daughters (1 Chron 7:15). There doesn't seem to be any significance to that notice except that the Chronicler is reiterating information he has received from the tradition, namely the books of Numbers and Joshua. But the book of Numbers gives these daughters names: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. Of interest in the list of Manasseh's descendants, apart from these women, is the fact that some of the names reflect more than individuals' names, but also the names of local regions and towns: Gilead, Shechem, and Tirzah. The genealogies, therefore, have a political interest in describing the intersections of Israelite and other populations.

The way the book of Numbers tells the story of the daughters should be noted. The first mention of Zelophehad and his daughters falls inside the genealogical list that is introduced by the command to take a census of the Israelites (Num 26:1–4). The "tribes" are listed according to the names of the eleven sons of Jacob. Similar lists can be found in Numbers 1 and 2. The lists in all three chapters contain numbers. After all, the book of Numbers begins with the Lord's command to take a census, to "number" the Israelites. The list in Numbers 26 is a census of the post-exodus generation, all who were at least twenty years old (26:2).

The daughters, included in that list (26:33), are "enrolled by Moses and Eleazar the priest" (26:63). These are the only women remembered in this genealogical tradition. Numbers 27 takes up the story of the daughters. They stand "before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and all the congregation" (27:2) and declare that their father wasn't among those who participated in the rebellious behaviour of the community (Numbers 13–14 and 25), and that he had no sons. Their point was straightforward: "Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers." The petition assumes that rights of inheritance pass from father to sons. The daughters do not want to be left out. More, they don't want to see their father's name (and family line) erased from the historical record. The daughters make a bold move here in their willingness to stand up publicly for their family right.

Moses takes their request seriously and consults the Lord, who provides a clear response. The daughters may inherit the land assigned to their father. Not only that, but the Lord presents a decree that sounds as though it might have come from the list of case laws in Exodus: "if a man dies, and has no son, then . . ." (Num 27:11). The sequence of four verses goes into considerable detail in setting out the scenario of inheritance if one has no sons, or no daughters. The text concludes with a summary statement that "It shall be for the Israelites a statute and ordinance, as the LORD commanded Moses" (27:11). There is a finality to that. The divine authorization provides a useful guide for future reference. What's striking, of course, is the fact that inheritance rights are not stipulated in the covenant code reflected in Exodus or the holiness code in Leviticus. However, that shouldn't surprise us, since nowhere do we read in the biblical law codes about whom one may marry.

For that reason, though, what happens later in the story is all the more surprising and illustrative. The daughters, having been granted the right to inherit, now find themselves facing a predicament. At the end of the book of Numbers we read of a complication. The "heads of the ancestral houses" of Manasseh's Gileadite clan perceive a potential problem should the inheritance of Zelophehad be passed on to his daughters, as Moses (and the Lord) had decreed. What if, they surmise, these daughters happen to marry outside the clan or tribe (36:3)? When they die, their inheritance, which originally belonged within the tribe of Manasseh, would transfer to the husband and/or to their male children of the husband's tribe. Such an occurrence would surely threaten the integrity of the landholding of any particular tribe. Of course, one can hear in the background, "What if it happens all over the place?"

Their argument is strengthened by appeal to the jubilee law (36:4; cf. Leviticus 25). The jubilee law allowed land to return to its ancestral families every fifty years. If the daughters inherit their father's land, and if they marry outside the clan or tribe, then the land would revert not to their original tribe but to the tribe of the man they married. Moses, of course, had not thought about that; nor does it seem as though the Lord had done so. The scenario that's depicted in Numbers 36:5 is somewhat humorous. The Lord affirms the complaint: "The descendants of the tribe of Joseph are right!" The solution is not long in coming. They may "marry whom they think best," with one qualifier. They must marry "into a clan of their father's tribe" (36:6). That way inheritance will not pass from one tribe to the other in case of death or jubilee year (36:7–9). The story concludes with a descriptive statement that these five women married within their father's clan "and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's clan" (36:12).

The book of Numbers doesn't say very clearly why the story of the daughters of Zelophehad is included. Presumably it is there to protect women's rights of inheritance. Or to protect the integrity of the clan/tribe. Or to prevent the dissipation of contiguous lands within clans/tribes. Or to clarify a possible complication arising out of the jubilee laws. But it's odd that few other similar customs are codified. We do find a law about women who make vows in the context of their parental home or in their marriages (Numbers 30:1–15). And that law puts significant restrictions on choices a woman might make either as a young person in her home, or as a woman in her marriage. But the scenario of the daughters of Zelophehad is interesting for an altogether different reason. It provides us with the one clear case in the Pentateuch of how "the law of Moses" actually developed.

## Excursion 6

During my fourth year as an undergraduate student at the University of British Columbia, I was privileged to be on the leadership team of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship group. We had weekly lecture events in one of the largest lecture halls on campus. One week I arrived a few minutes late. The person chairing the meeting and introducing the guest speaker saw me walk in and asked me to open the meeting with a prayer. I stood up, and was about to say something, but all I could say was, "I'm sorry, I can't." I hadn't prepared to say that. I wasn't prepared for my own response. It came out in a rather abrupt and immediate sense of the silence or absence of God.

Some years prior a Bible college teacher told a class I was in, "If you feel far away from God, guess who moved." That day at UBC I felt far away from God, but no one had told me that that was all right. That it was normal. Even that there was biblical precedent for my situation. I had been living in the illusion that I was responsible for the divine presence. I had to wait until studying the Psalms in graduate school to discover that the hiddenness of God was one of the most prominent themes in the Psalms.

The experiential movement of Psalm 30 reflects the poet's journey from secur-

ity in God's presence, "I shall not be moved" (v 6), to "you hid your face, I was dismayed" (v 7). Of course the psalmist also celebrates a joyous transformation (v 11). But it's that dark "you hid your face" that reverberates throughout the Psalms and that offered me hope. It may seem, from Psalm 30, that one might offer a petition to God, as the poet does in verses 9–10, to which God responds immediately in verse 11. Yet other psalms suggest that the poets often experienced God's absence for long periods of time. Cries of "hurry" (22:20; 38:22; 40:13; 70:1, 5; 141:1) or "wake up" (35:23) imply a desperation that sounds impolite or improper. Yet Psalm 13:1 with its "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" suggests that the experience of God's hiddenness isn't simply a transient "it seems as though God is absent," which is a response I sometimes hear. No, the experience is truly of divine abandonment. Jesus's cry from the cross, echoing Psalm 22:1, reflects the same experience. The psalmist even states bluntly, "I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest" (Ps 22:2).

Of course what I discovered through my study of the Psalms, and what I continue to teach in Bible courses at CMU, is that the Psalms reflect a rich storehouse of spirituality and theological reflection. Many Psalms celebrate God as an abiding and a sustaining presence. The refrain "I shall not be moved" occurs in one form or another about fifteen times. And there are times when God is depicted as one who hears, sees, and comes down to rescue, who acts to judge and to save, who heals, transforms, and gives new life when everything seems to be lost and the future seems bleak and hopeless. Yet there are those often unspeakable times when we know God only as a hidden and elusive presence. When, like the psalmists, we can only cry out into the silence of injustice, pain, and brokenness. This is life. This is a place in which I can only sit and wait: "For God alone my soul waits in silence" (Ps 62:1). This is truly hopeful. There is no place where I must say (unless, of course, I've done something nasty or inflicted damage on the world or on another person) that if I feel far away from God, guess who moved.

It is a truly hopeful thing to be able to affirm, with Pascal, the seventeenth-century mathematician, "What can be seen on earth indicates neither the total absence, nor the manifest presence of divinity, but the presence of a hidden God. Everything bears this stamp."[23] This is a fact: God is sometimes hidden, and silent. This is part of the great spiritual tradition of Scripture, expressed in the many lament psalms that cry out of the brokenness of the world. This cry is a recognition of what it means to participate in authentic dialogue with the one of whom Isaiah says, "Truly you are a God who hides himself" (Isaiah 45:15). As Samuel Balentine puts it, "In effect the prayers of lament give form to even the darkest experiences and so guarantee their legitimacy in the life of faith."[24] The effect of such affirma-

23 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées.* trans., A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1966), *#449*, 170.

24 *The Hidden God: The Hiding Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University

tion is to suggest, as Balentine does, "God is hidden just as he is present; he is far away just as he is near. Once this fact is given due consideration, then it is possible to understand the Old Testament's witness to the absence of a present God."[25]

## Sustainable Feasting on Scripture

The six excursions above demonstrate the kinds of explorations I might offer in an Introduction to the Bible course. I could have multiplied similar examples from other parts of the Bible. These six are not comprehensive illustrations of how Slow biblical study works. Nor do they offer a particular method that might be classified as Slow. Yet each of them illustrates how paying careful attention in a variety of ways can be "useful" without making usefulness a necessary criterion for right interpretation. What I have offered above are excursions into the biblical textual landscape. These are walking, or at the most cycling, tours.

Some years ago my family cycled around Prince Edward Island for eight-days. We could have done the drive in a car in one day, with short stops at all the places we visited on the eight day ride. No doubt we would have enjoyed the car ride. But we would not have noticed, appreciated, or enjoyed that day in the same way. Cycling around PEI required a good deal of stamina, but mostly it fostered an appreciation for detail. We noticed things we would not have noticed otherwise. We met people we would have missed by driving. And we created deeper memories because we were viscerally involved in the excursion.

Of course hands will go up. Questions will be raised. There must be a moral of the story. There must be an application. There must be a biblical worldview in there somewhere. Isn't there a theology to be gleaned from these texts? I am very much interested in all of those questions. But that's not where I begin. I begin with the assumption that entering the world of the text will lead me into both familiar and strange, even disturbing territory. My answers might come from the text itself. More often than not, however, responses will be directly related to autobiography. By patiently probing, listening, and answering back to what I notice in the text, my own questions surface in the give and take of conversation. Biblical study, more than anything, is a conversation. I am not a passive listener. I am a conversation partner.[26]

Slow emerges from this conviction: God is not all that anxious for us to get it right. God, as the book of Exodus puts it, wants to "dwell" among us (see the echo of that motif in John 1:14). Exodus narrates the story of a slave community set free

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Press, 1983), 173.

25 Ibid., 175–76.

26 For an exploration of these ideas, see my article "The Word Made Bitter: At the Table with Joshua, Buber, and Bakhtin," in *The Old Testament in the Life of God's People: Essays in Honour of Elmer A. Martens*, ed. Jon Isaak (Winona Lake, WI: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 307–32; and the Introduction and the essay "Difficult Conversations" in my commentary *Joshua,* Believers Church Bible Commentary (Harrisonburg and Waterloo: Herald Press, 2012), 17–37, 421–24.

for responsible life in the world. Matthew's gospel explores Jesus's early years and finds echoes of the Exodus story, including a wicked ruler (Herod) and a sojourn in Egypt. Matthew's Jesus is "Emmanuel" (Matt 1:23), the God with us who shapes a community of disciples who "do the will of the father" (Matt 12:50).

Much of what I've written is autobiographical and proceeds from the assumption that outcomes—either better or more comprehensive information, or clarity on theological and ethical matters—are not the Bible student's primary agenda. These may well come one's way, but they will not come in helpful ways if one is in a hurry. In my six excursions and in my teaching I try to practice doing theology the way the biblical writers did it: patient transposition of the tradition, over time, in order to imagine a future in which God's vision for health, healing, and wholeness might flourish among humankind and for all creation. Such a grand vision for why one might read or study the Bible requires Slow as its *modus operandi*, and humility as its guiding impulse.

This means that there is very little that is finalizable. The history of biblical interpretation bears that out. As the Gospel of John demonstrates, Jesus had very little patience for his detractors who practiced primarily a utilitarian, or outcomes-based, view of Scripture texts. They wanted something out of Scripture that Jesus calls "eternal life," but without the Word made flesh (John 5:39–40).

My excursions have illustrated a dialogical, nonsynthetic, open-ended attentiveness to texts with a view to discerning how our theological imagination might be nourished by feasting on Scripture. Since Scripture is the great tradition with which we have to do, we do well to realize that it will at the same time orient us, disorient us, and reorient us. It will become "like goads, and like nails" (Eccl 12:11), providing us both with clarity of vision and pushing us beyond our comfortable limits. It will narrate who we were, who we are, and who we might yet become. It will invite us to honour the world and its creatures and shock us into recognition that God is interested in saving even the animals (e.g., Ps 36:6).

There are no short cuts to Slow. Slow will not atomize texts as though a verse here or there can provide sustenance. It will not reduce a text to whatever speaks to me. Texts will be read as evidence of a long history of discernment beginning with ancient storytellers and editors and ending with contemporary critical reflection. Above all the Bible will be read as a dialogue partner in a multivoiced conversation in community. And it will require something of us. Cooking *coq au vin* by using the recipe in Julia Child's book *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* is not complicated. But it will take time. The experience of eating the meal (along with Brussels sprouts smothered in creamy dill sauce, roasted potatoes, and chocolate mousse) will make not only for a memorable meal, but a delightful conversation. Above all, from the making to the eating, Slow Food will be an experience of "reawakening and training [the] senses."[27] I remember such a meal more than many others I've eaten. So it is with what we might call Slow Hermeneutics or Slow Biblical Inter-

27 http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/mission.lasso.

pretation. Patient, humble, and engaged conversation with biblical texts will yield a richly transformed imagination. Not an imagination that doesn't at times balk at or argue with the text. But an imagination that trusts the future that God dreams about, that hopes for transformation of all things broken and bleeding, and that loves the One about whom the text testifies.

# Minding the Church: Practicing a Spacious Ecclesiology

*Irma Fast Dueck*

## Minding the Church

"Religion would be so easy without the followers!" The line comes from an exchange between two clergy, one Christian and one Muslim, on the sitcom "Little Mosque on the Prairie." It is a Canadian sitcom about a group of Muslims and Christians attempting to live in harmony with each other in a fictional Saskatchewan prairie town called Mercy. The series features regular conversations between the local Christian minister and the Imam of the small local mosque and in one particular episode the minister and Imam are complaining about their parishioners who, though very earnest in their faiths, are up to all kinds of mischief, creating troubles for the clergy to deal with. In exasperation the Christian minister exclaims to his Muslim clergy friend, "Religion would be so easy without the followers!" Without a doubt religion would certainly be less complicated without followers. And teaching would be easier without students. And Christian education would be simpler without the church. And theological education would be less complicated without seminary students asking the troublesome question, "But what does any of this have to do with ministry in the church?" But then again, if religion isn't about the followers and Christian education isn't about the church then what *is* it for?

Richard Hughes has argued that one of the distinctive features of Anabaptist scholarship is the call to "mind the church."[1] Anabaptist scholarship and Anabaptist schools, colleges, and universities are bound up with the church and this relationship between Christian higher education and the church has been of particular interest

1 Richard T. Hughes, Foreword to *Minding the Church: Scholarship in the Anabaptist Tradition*, ed. David Weaver-Zercher (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2002), 9.

to Gerald Gerbrandt for most of his career. Indeed, Gerald never asks *whether* Anabaptist scholars should serve the church but is keenly interested in *how* they should do so.[2] Of course this commitment to the church has presented significant challenges to both Anabaptist scholars and institutions. For some this commitment to the church is perceived as a threat to academic freedom. It appears to stand in tension with more typical understandings of scholarship as cultivation of the mind and the advancement of knowledge of a particular discipline, though as Gerald has argued, pitting academic freedom against serving the church reflects a limited understanding of both academic freedom and the church.[3] While all Christian scholars have a responsibility to practice their scholarship with Christian integrity, all scholars (not only theologians), Gerald contends, employed in church-related institutions of higher education have a particular responsibility to serve the church. In Gerald's words, the church-related university/college is "where the church thinks," though Gerald is quick to add, it is not the only place where the church does its thinking.[4]

## Minding the Gap

The relationship between the Christian university and the church has seldom been an easy or comfortable liaison. While the university has struggled to make meaningful connections and find "relevant ways" to speak to the church, the church too has been historically suspicious of higher theological education. Gerald begins an essay tracing the history and character of Mennonite higher education with a Low German phrase not uncommon in Mennonite communities, *je jelieda, je fechieda* (roughly translated: the more educated, the more perverted).[5] There are various reasons for the church's particular wariness of theological higher education. For some the Christian faith is self-evident and "common sense" and does not require critical theological interpretation and engagement in order to be understood. Historically, for others in the church there has been a suspicion that higher theological education might result in a kind of "theological professionalism" incompatible with a nonhierarchical understanding of the church as the priesthood of all believers. And for still others theological higher education appears irrelevant to the lived, embodied life of the church. This is not altogether surprising since the theological resourcing of the church has tended to be unidirectional, where the university resources and informs the church, and there have been limited ways through which the church is able to

2 Gerald Gerbrandt, "Scholars as Servants of the Church," *Direction* 33 no. 2 (Fall 2004): 133.

3 Ibid., 138.

4 Gerbrandt develops the theme of the church-related institution as the place where the church thinks, in the Rod and Lorna Sawatzky Lecture given at Conrad Grebel University College entitled: "Where the Church Thinks: The Role of the Christian Scholar" (February 8, 2013).

5 Gerald Gerbrandt, "Who Are We? Mennonite Higher Education," in *Mennonite Education in a Post-Christian World*, ed. Harry Huebner (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1998), 17.

theologically and practically "talk back" to the university.[6]

If indeed, as Richard Hughes claims, the distinctive part of Anabaptist scholarship is to "mind the church," it may be that part of minding the church is "minding the gap" between church and university. Critical to understanding how to serve the church is the question of who *is* the church that the university is thinking for? There is, perhaps, a tendency for the church university to think of the church more in abstract terms than as a concrete, embodied community. This is the fundamental critique of Catholic theologian Nicholas Healy, in his book *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*. Healy criticizes modern ecclesiology more generally as being primarily concerned with models and concepts of the church that are disconnected from the reality of lived church communities. In his words,

> In general ecclesiology in our period has become highly systematic and theoretical, focused more upon discerning the right things to think about the church rather than oriented to the living, rather messy, confused, and confusing body that the church actually is.[7]

According to Healy church is understood as an ideal, in its perfection rather than as a human, embodied community that is situated in concrete time and place. Theology for the church is oriented to the church's essence but does not necessarily enable its practice. The risk in Christian higher theological education is to develop a kind of "ex-carnate" view of the church quite apart from the incarnate Body of Christ, in living, bodied, human communities.

This is not to suggest that the often messy life of Christian communities has been ignored by the university. Critical reflection and interpretation of congregational life has typically been accessed through the disciplines of the social sciences (for example, sociology, psychology, cultural theory, conflict resolution studies, etc.) and social history. While these disciplines offer important perspectives and insights into the church as a living community, without the accompanying theological understandings of the church the risk is that the church is reduced to a purely human community, apart from its theological identity as the Body of Christ in the world. Returning again to Healy's critique of contemporary ecclesiology, while he is cautious of any kind of theological reductionism which reduces the church to an abstract idea, he is equally concerned with an opposing sociological reductionism where the church is reduced primarily to a human community, which is a distortion of its theological identity in Christ.[8]

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6 This is not to suggest that there are not mechanisms for the church to dialogue with the university. Many Christian faculty members are active members of congregations and students, too, are frequently active participants. However, to depend on the personal experiences of faculty and student members in the church as the primary way of engaging the church is limited and problematic.

7 Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

8 Ibid., 10.

To reduce the church to either an abstract idea or as merely a human community is antithetical to the understanding of the church in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. At its best, the Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of the church is neither esoteric nor abstract, but it is to be a tangible lived expression of Christ. It is the life of the human Christ which continues to receive form in the lived obedience of the church. Christ takes on flesh in the world as believers continue to live Christ's life of love and self-giving. Simply put, the church audaciously claims that it is called to become God's project for the world. The church, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, is to carry on Jesus's own ministry. The church is where Christ is given form and is embodied.[9] The church's primary agenda is witnessing to God's vision, through the church's actions and life both within and outside of the church. The church is called to be God's alternative community in the context of the historical situation, like a "city on a hill" (Matthew 5:14).

With such an understanding of the church it is impossible to imagine "minding the church" without attention to the practical, rooted in the everydayness of life in the Christian community and the world. This requires a more spacious ecclesiology that extends beyond the academic discipline of theology and a particular kind of theological "know-how" to practice it.

## Bridging the Gap—Practicing a More Spacious Ecclesiology

More recently there has been a renewed call to bridge the gap between university and church; however, the appeal is not to something *new* but rather a reclaiming of theological education in a more classical sense, as being primarily about formation, linking mind and body, hopes and desires, heart and head.[10] This has been the

9 Some Anabaptist-Mennonite scholars have characterized this incarnational understanding of the church as "the church as sacrament." While early Anabaptists didn't have a sacramental understanding of the Eucharist or baptism, many have argued that they did have a sacramental understanding of the church. Early Anabaptists believed that Christ became incarnated through their corporate actions as the Body of Christ. Christ was "physically present" on earth through the life of the Church. This sacramental understanding of the church in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has frequently been highlighted through the work on early Anabaptist reformer, Pilgram Marpeck. See John Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1993); William Klassen and Walter Klaassen, trans. and eds., *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978); Walter Klaassen, Werner Packull, and John Rempel, trans., *Later Writings by Pilgram Marpeck and His Circle* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1999). See also C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1995). Synder writes, "When we read Anabaptist statements describing the church as the Body of Christ, and individual believers as members or limbs of that Body, we tend to take this as an extended metaphor, not a literal description. There is much evidence to suggest, to the contrary, that for many Anabaptists it was intended as a *literal* description and not a metaphor at all. As ecclesiology assumed more importance, so too did a sacramental conception of the church" (223).

10 It is interesting that up until the Middle Ages, theology was not understood so much as an academic discipline but as a way of knowing God. Theology was done within the context of the life of Church as a worshipping community. The bifurcation of theology, biblical studies,

contention of philosopher James K. A. Smith, who writes, "by focusing on what we think and believe, such a model misses the centrality and primacy of what we *love,* by focusing on education as the dissemination of *in*formation, we have missed the ways in which Christian education is really a project of *form*ation."[11] While the bias toward humans as first of all thinking beings is difficult to break, Smith is tenacious in providing an account where thinking emerges secondarily to a "bodily interaction with the world."[12] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore too appeals for scholarship practices which disrupt conventional theological boundaries and embrace alternative ways of knowing, including drawing on "practical wisdom as a way of theological knowing," embracing a broader range of Christian experience and practice as a way of doing theology.[13]

## Minding the Practices of the Church

Critical to practicing a more spacious ecclesiology and engaging in theological education oriented toward formation is paying attention to the embodied nature of what the church does, that is, the church's practices. Karl Barth begins his classic *Church Dogmatics* with the statement, "Theology is a function of the Church."[14] If the church is indeed a social group, an embodied community of people, or as some have been saying, that the church has its own *culture*, theology as a *function* of the church is linked to its "cultural," social practices. Theology is related to the meaning-making activity of the people who comprise the community of Christ. The practices of the church function "as *purveyors*—as building blocks (providers) and *conveyors*—of what we might call 'Christian cultural meaning.'"[15] Alasdair MacIntyre, in his classic book *After Virtue,* argues that it is through the engagement in practices that the virtue, character, and wisdom of communities and individuals are formed. Identities as persons and as communities are constituted by practices and the knowledge and relationships which practices mediate.[16]

More careful attention to practices may in fact be key both in enabling a more

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practical theology, spirituality, etc., into discrete disciplines would have been foreign to the theologians of the first centuries of Christianity. See John W. De Gruchy, "The Nature, Necessity and Task of Theology," in *Doing Theology in Context,* eds. John W. De Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 2–14.

11 James K. A. Smith, *Imaging the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 7.

12 Ibid., 82.

13 Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 1.

14 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1975), 3.

15 Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 165.

16 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

spacious ecclesiology and helping to bridge the gap between church and university. When theology engages with church practices it transforms them from mere activities into socially meaningful practices. At their core all Christian activities are theological. All Christian practices are linked to, informed by, or are expressions of, some underlying theological belief or core value. Practices embody, in visible ways, the central beliefs of a community and express the vision of the good of a community.[17] As such, practices are *lived theology*. Craig Dykstra claims that it is through participation in the practices of Christian life that "the community of faith comes continually to awareness of and participation in the creative and redemptive activity of God in the world."[18] It would be impossible to understand Christianity without reference to Christianity's practices. In the words of Amy Plantinga Pauw,

> Beliefs about God are not pure truths grasped by a Cartesian ego and then "applied" to the messy, ambiguous, realm of practice. Religious beliefs are interwoven with a larger set of other beliefs and embedded in particular ways of life. They are couched in the language, conceptuality, and history of a particular people and reflect personal and communal experience and desires. Religious beliefs shape and are shaped by religious practices.[19]

Theology, at its best, makes explicit the connection all Christian practices have to their underlying meaning and to the particular Christian symbols which carry the rich depths of the Christian faith.[20] It makes sense, then, that reflection on the practices of the church community is a critical task of theological education. Part of this critical reflection is to help bring to light the meaning structures that inform practices, but critical reflection is also crucial in evaluating practices and attending to the gap between what might be the "doctrinal" or "confessional" theology of the faith tradition and the "functional" theology expressed in the church, a living community.[21]

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17 Ibid.

18 Craig Dykstra, "Reconceiving Practice in Theological Inquiry and Education" in Nancey Murphy et al., eds., *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics After MacIntyre* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 175.

19 Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Attending to the Gaps between Beliefs and Practices," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life,* ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 36.

20 Grenz and Franke, 165.

21 It is important to recognize that when theologians invoke the concept of practice, they do so in diverse ways, drawing on various theoretical underpinnings and working toward a variety of ends. The concept of practice therefore doesn't represent a single theory or approach but rather a collection of intellectual approaches that have collectively shifted the attention away from more narrow approaches to the study of theology and contemporary faith that have tended to emphasize the role of belief systems. See Ted Smith, "Theories of Practice," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Malden, MA:

However, the task of theology in relation to practices is more than critical reflection, it is also constructive. Theological reflection is itself a practice of the church. Theological construction at its best sets forth a particular understanding of the particular "web of significance" or "matrix of meaning" that lies at the heart of the community of Christ.[22] The constructive task of theology emerges out of the relationship between theologian and church. This give and take relationship comes from being participants in the community of faith, participants who hold in common the shared meanings of the symbols and practices of the community. Simply put, we shape the community and it shapes us right back. In the words of Alister McGrath, "Christian theology is seen at its best and at its most authentic when it engages and informs the life of the Christian community on the one hand, and is in turn engaged and informed by that life on the other. In short: theology is grounded in the life of a praying, worshipping, and reflecting community, which seeks to find the best manner of expressing that faith intellectually, and allows it to generate and inform its best practices."[23]

## Learning to Read the Church Faithfully: The Case For Ethnography as a Theological Practice

As mentioned earlier, such constructive theological engagement with the church and its practices may require particular theological "know-how." Increasingly, practical theologians have been drawing on the resources of ethnographic and qualitative research methods to enable their study of the practices of the church. This intersection of ecclesiology and ethnography is based upon the assumption that the church is both theological and social in its nature. Those engaging the conversation between ethnography and ecclesiology attempt to engage in a more spacious ecclesiology through resisting the temptation to *apply* a preexisting doctrine of ecclesiology to a particular situation or practice.[24] Rather, the attempt is made to understand the church as being *simultaneously* theological and social/cultural; that is, the church understood both theologically and socially is considered ecclesiological. As such, *doing* ecclesiology from within the theological situatedness of the church requires resources and methods that are themselves simultaneously theological and ethnographic. This type of doing theology depends on use of empirical analyses alongside theological analyses.

Why ethnography? English sociologist John Brewer defines ethnography as

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Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

22 Grenz and Franke, 165ff.

23 Alister E. McGrath, "The Cultivation of Theological Vision: Theological Attentiveness and the Practice of Ministry," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography,* ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids, MI Eerdmans, 2012), 107.

24 This engagement of ethnography and ecclesiology has been the focus of a network of theologians, Christian ethicists, and practical theologians. For a fuller description of the network, articles and publications, see https://ecclesiologyandethnography.wordpress.com/.

"the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally."[25] Theologian Paul S. Fiddes provides a more simplified understanding of ethnography: "ethnography, as employed by social scientists, is rooted in observing the life and practices of a specified group of human people and drawing conclusions 'inductively' from them."[26] At its simplest, ethnography draws on a series of methods in order to gather and collate data in very particular contexts, such as a church congregation. In order to gather the data the ethnographer enters into a "natural" context (that is, not a situation developed in an experimental "laboratory") and observes the situation using particular methods. The methodologies enable both observation and interpretation and in this way are not unlike any other methodologies such as those used by biblical scholars to interpret biblical texts (hermeneutics), or historical or theological methodologies used to guide historians reading historical texts, etc. The difference is, however, that the "texts" that are being read and interpreted by ethnographers are "living texts"—the life of living communities.

As a methodological approach, ecclesiologically engaged ethnography is grounded in the conviction that all social science is ultimately theological in nature. As such, theologians who engage in ethnography should do so with a theological sensibility.[27] At minimum this means learning to read the "living text" of the church through eyes of faith. Ethnography itself is a "way of looking" which, when

25 John Brewer, *Ethnography* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 2, as found in John Swinton, "Where Is Your Church?" *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, 77. Brewer distinguishes between two modes of ethnography, *big* and *little* ethnography. *Big* ethnography refers more generally to any approaches which utilize qualitative methods (vs. quantitative methods such as statistical surveys, etc.). *Little* ethnography refers to particular fieldwork projects and studies and becomes a very specific methodological way of doing qualitative research. Frequently those theologians participating in the Ecclesiology and Ethnography network using the term "ethnography" in its broadest sense—*big* ethnography, encompassing any form of qualitative research.

26 Paul S. Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?" in Pete Ward, *Perspectives,* 13.

27 The author recognizes the suspicion of and resistance to the social sciences by theologians such as Stanley Hauerwas and John Millbank. Milbank himself states "there is no need, as has become commonplace, to bring social theory and theology together, for social theory is already theology, and theology already a social theory." The critique is connected to the claim that though the social sciences are *descriptive* they function in manners that are *prescriptive*; that is, a description of a particular narrative account of society becomes normative for how it should be. See John Millbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 380. However if ecclesiological ethnographers begin with the assumption that social science is theological at its core, the narrative account described is no longer a neutral rendering but rather is unabashedly shaped by a (Christian) theological story.

seeing through the eyes of faith, invites a particular theological lens. In other words, the ecclesiological ethnographic "lens" is never a "neutral" lens. While empirical study often assumes a kind of factual observation where the terms of truth are verifiable, this quickly comes into tension with the claims of theology and ecclesial communities, whose identity, motivations, desires are shaped by things beyond what can be immediately "factually" observed but can only be understood through faith. That is, theology shapes in a very "real" way the life of the church, and an invisible God in Christ animated by the Holy Spirit is in "fact" the very reason for the church's existence. Those participating in the Ecclesiology and Ethnography network are not suggesting what is often termed a "correlation" between theology and the social sciences but rather a culturally and socially situated theology and at the same time, a theologically informed ethnography. Clearly, doing ethnography in a distinctly theological way is deeply and unapologetically value laden.[28]

Theologically engaged ethnography has the possibility of enabling theologians to bridge the perceived gap between empirical and theological analyses of the church, creating a more spacious ecclesiology and enabling the Christian university to better mind the church. Let me suggest a few further contributions:

First, a theologically shaped ethnography enables a greater ecclesiological integrity, or in the words of Pete Ward, a more *plausible ecclesiology*.[29] As mentioned earlier, the current interest of theologians in ethnography comes from a perceived gap between empirical and theological analyses of the church. Ethnography (in its simplest form, any form of qualitative research) provides a way that theologians can take seriously the actual practice and social context of the church and in so doing, enables the theologians to be taken seriously by the church. Ethnography invites a greater carefulness into how ecclesiology is done. While there is careful academic rigour and methodological care appealed to in other areas of theological research such as history, biblical studies, and systematic theology, when it comes to talking about contemporary church frequently assertions are made based primarily on selective experience (often the theologian's own personal experience) or anecdotes or stories, where assertions are made about the church with little evidence to support them. It is what Ward simply calls "methodological laziness in ecclesiology."[30] Ethnography invites a disciplinary rigour and academic honesty needed in minding the church. This is not at all to suggest that theologians become less theological but rather that they utilize the tools of ethnography to enable them to talk more faithfully about the social and cultural reality of the church, even as they do so in theological language.

Ethnography also contributes toward a more plausible ecclesiology by creating a greater correspondence between the theological representation of the church

28 John Swinton, "Where Is Your Church?" 76.

29 Pete Ward, Introduction to *Perspectives*, 4.

30 Ibid., 4.

and the social reality of Christian communities.[31] It provides a way of talking about the church that is more directly connected to the social life of the church. A greater correspondence between a theology and the life of the church creates the possibility of better being able to shape and inspire the imagination of Christian communities in what it means to be the church, the living Body of Christ. Interestingly it is the church that binds the researcher with his/her subjects. It is participation in the life of the church and the focused attention on the practices of communities that shape the theologian and his/her research, creating a commonality between the theologian and those whom s/he writes about. This shared calling and vocation between theologian and those participating in Christian communities also contributes to a more plausible ecclesiology and integrity of research.

Ethnography takes seriously the cultural location of the church. This particular interest in the cultural and social location of the church is not new and has been present since as early as the nineteenth century. However from the mid-twentieth century until now, questions around the cultural location of the church have been particularly prominent as evidenced by the seminal works of theologians such as H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* and Paul's Tillich's *Theology of Culture*. The Second Vatican Council continued the attention to the church's location in modern contemporary world, and liberation theologians emphasized the cultural particularity of the Christian faith and church. All this was an attempt to recover the church's incarnational and embodied nature which at times had been obscured by the abstract and universalizing tendencies of theological reflection.

For some this engagement with theology and culture resulted in a reclaiming of the church as its own distinctive and alternative culture. Theologians such as John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas have argued that the church is itself a political reality, a social body with its own cultural system with its own way of constructing its social life together.[32] For people in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, this way of conceiving the church as an alternative culture has been particularly appealing, as the church has historically understood itself as distinct from the social and political world in which it is located. Kathryn Tanner, in her book *Theories of Culture*, critiques this notion of "culture formed through worship and existing as a counter-community and story over against the dominant culture and story of modern liberal democratic society."[33] Such an understanding of the church, Tanner and others have argued, fails to adequately recognize cultural location and how it contributes to the culturally distinct identity of the church. Tanner appeals

31 Ibid., 5.

32 For example, see John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1994); Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989); Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Westmont, ILL: Intervarsity Press, 2006).

33 Kathryn Tanner, as found in Aana Marie Vigen and Christian Scharen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2011), 34.

"to understand congregations as particularly shaped *by the world* in order to see how their formative power worked *over against the world*."[34] Clearly the "alternative" cultural identity of the church is not a culture that is a self-contained unit, a unified set of beliefs and practices that is disconnected from the cultures around it.[35] In this way, as Kathryn Tanner points out, it is difficult to sustain the notion of the church as an alternative social world.[36] All cultures find creative ways in consuming and relating to other cultures, and this has been particularly the case for cultures which are "marginalized" such as the church. While ethnography introduces a way of reading the church as an alternative culture, more interestingly is the possibility of doing ecclesiological ethnography in such a way to help understand how the culture of the church creatively engages and absorbs the cultural influences around it. The literature emanating from the "emerging" and "missional" church movements has been important in drawing attention to the fact that a wave of change is breaking upon the shores of the church; cultural shifts are taking place that the church needs to find ways of navigating. Ecclesiological ethnography can provide the resources and "know-how" in helping both interpret and shape the church's own cultural self-understanding as it engages the cultures surrounding it.

The goal of ecclesiological ethnography is not merely to provide a descriptive account of the church but rather, as the investigation of a Christian community engaging the theological tradition, it has the possibility of being transformative. At its best critical reflection on the life of the church can in fact lead to new actions and greater faithfulness, enabling the church to better be the church. In the Christian university, ecclesiological ethnography has the potential of bringing together social theory, social sciences, and theology in helping the university mind the church.

## Conclusion—Holding All Things Together

It would be difficult to conceive Christian higher education apart from the call to mind the church, and this has clearly been the vision of Gerald Gerbrandt. At an earlier time in the history of the church this appeal to attend to the church and its life would have seemed strange if not bizarre. At the heart of Christian education was formation and transformation, which could not be imagined as possible without an embodied practicing church. The old joke "practical theol-

34 Ibid., 35.

35 Late modern approaches to cultural theory see diverse cultures as sharing cultural elements with open boundaries between them. See for example, Daniel Cottom, *Text and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). Early modern analysis of culture tended to view cultural identity as much more bounded and localized as a distinct social group (a "way of life"). See for example, Alfred L. Kroeber and Klyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

36 Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 97–102.

ogy is an oxymoron" would have been lost on the early church, where theology and practice were intimately connected. "True theology *is* practical," argued Martin Luther, "speculative theology belongs to the devil in hell."[37] Clearly Christian university education is more than dropping ideas and thoughts into "eager and willing mind-receptacles."[38] The idea of attending Christian university for three or four years and then spending the rest of one's life "applying" the knowledge in the field of the church seems ludicrous. It wasn't until the twelfth century, when universities became more independent from the church and developed a more narrow definition of scholarship, that theology came to be seen as an academic discipline apart the church and its practices, separated from personal devotion (spirituality). Following the Enlightenment, theology as a discrete academic discipline developed alongside other academic disciplines within the university, though frequently resulting in the creation of academic silos separated by deep suspicion of the other. Sadly the suspicion extended not only between academic disciplines but also between theology and the church.

Paying renewed attention to Christian practices is a way of bridging the gap between the university and the church, but more than that, is a way of creating a more spacious ecclesiology that includes the philosophical, historical, and theological tradition but also extends to embody the church as a lived, incarnational community. Pete Ward expresses this in Christological terms through the poem in Colossians 1 where Christ is "the image of the father, the firstborn of creation, in whom all things have their origin and in whom all things have their reconciliation. In him *all things hold together.*"[39] The passage provides a Christological starting point for shaping Christian higher education. It is because of Christ, "the head of his body, the church" that ecclesiology can be conceived at the same time as both a theological and a social/cultural reality. It is because of the incarnation of Christ, that practices of the church are not merely human actions but purveyors of faith. It is Christ who holds together both the human and divine embodiment of the church. It is Christ who holds together the tangible visibility of the church with the invisibility of faith. It is Christ who holds all things together which makes it impossible for theology and history and philosophy and social theory and social sciences to be separated from each other.

Minding the church in this time and place requires a particular kind of theological "know-how," where an understanding of theology and theological education is extended beyond an academic discipline to, as Bonnie Miller-McLemore writes, a "recognition of its multiplicity, or the many valuable shapes and places in

37 Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* ed. T. G. Tappert, 55 vols. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1955–1986), 22.

38 James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 18.

39 Ward, Introduction, 2–3.

which theology and wisdom of God appear."[40] As such, theology is more than an academic discipline done in a Christian university but may be understood more like *liturgy*, literally meaning *the work of the people*.[41] Simply put, if the primary goal of theological education is the ongoing Christian formation of the church, a more "spacious" and robust ecclesiology that extends beyond the walls of the university may be needed.

40 Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 2.

41 Ibid.

# Alumni Voices

# Teaching Christian Theology at a Canadian Public University

*Jeremy M. Bergen*

## Introduction

It is a privilege to offer a contribution in honour of a leader who has shaped Canadian Mennonite University. It is also a privilege to offer the same contribution in honour of my uncle Gerald. I was probably one of very few children for whom "dean" was among the jobs a grownup might have, alongside other tangible options such train engineer, firefighter, or minister. Though at the time I'm sure I had little sense of what a dean did, I am grateful for what this dean, and president, was doing all along to shape institutions that have in turn profoundly shaped my own identity and vocation, and for Gerald's positive influence at the intersection of church and academy in Canada.

In this chapter, I will reflect on the teaching of Christian theology in a public university. I do so from the very specific perspective of Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo (UW), and the 100-level undergraduate course Introduction to Christian Theology, which I have taught eight times. Though Conrad Grebel University College has long understood itself as the sister institution of CMU (and previously CMBC), the Grebel model of a Mennonite-Christian college on the campus of and affiliated with a large research-intensive public University of Waterloo is quite a different sibling.

"Who is a Grebel student?" is a perennial question. Students connect with Grebel's residence program or academic program, and sometimes both. Students in Grebel's residence community, which includes a chapel program, reflect the full

range of university faculties—arts, science, engineering, math, environment, and applied health sciences. Alumni updates in Grebel publications are dominated by those who've had a significant connection to the residence. These often strongly identify themselves with Grebel, even if they may have had little connection to a Grebel academic program. On the other hand, the undergraduate students in courses offered by Grebel in music, peace and conflict studies, religious studies, history, and sociology are drawn from among the nearly 30,000 undergraduates at the university.[1] These courses are simply UW Faculty of Arts courses.

The UW Religious Studies Department, somewhat unusual in theory but workable in practice, is constituted by faculty who have been hired by one of five agencies: three affiliated colleges and one federated university, all of which with specific denominational links, plus the UW Faculty of Arts. Faculty teach a range of courses in Asian religions, Jewish studies, Christian traditions, or religion, culture and society, assigned through a negotiation between college and department. Grebel and St. Jerome's University (Catholic) have made it a particular priority to offer faculty and courses that, in various ways, emerge from their religious identities. My undergraduate courses, which are in the area of Christian theology/Christian thought, are simply part of the UW's religious studies offerings.

I name the structural aspects of the Religious Studies Department because it shapes the expectations and experience of students who may take Introduction to Christian Theology, yet by no means does it determine it. In fact, many students are unsure of what kind of "space" it will be. Is it "Christian" or "Mennonite" space? "Secular" or "public"?[2] Some will come to the course having taken religious studies courses with a distinct social science orientation; others may have taken courses on the Bible from my colleagues at Grebel. Some may assume that a religious studies classroom will require the bracketing of personal religious convictions. Others appear to expect it to be a place of refuge *from* the wider university, perhaps an exercise in Christian faith that will be in substantial continuity with Bible studies and discussion groups they have experienced in church settings. While students know the course is physically offered in a building called "Grebel," many will be unaware that Grebel is an autonomous but affiliated institution supported by a Mennonite-Christian constituency.

The place of theology within departments of religious studies continues to be contested in the literature,[3] even though it is not generally a contentious issue with

1 Grebel also offers masters programs in Theological Studies, and in Peace and Conflict Studies.

2 I prefer to speak about this university as public rather than secular, since the latter suggests a secularist exclusion of religious convictions from common discourse, which is not the case. A public university space, I would argue, supports multiple lines of critical inquiry, including those shaped by faith and other convictions, toward a common goal of speaking truthfully about the world in which we live.

3 The literature is vast. In my view, the most helpful single volume is Linell E. Cady and Delwin

University of Waterloo administration. The legacy of the confessional teaching of the Christian religion in Canadian universities, and the ongoing involvement of denominationally affiliated colleges, creates concerns about whether a Christian ethos is implicitly or explicitly promoted in classrooms, whether persons of all religions and no religion are fully welcome, and whether modes of discourse are appropriately critical, rigorous, and objective. One scholar suggests that there are those teaching in Canadian university religious studies departments who ought not to be on account of their narrow "intellectual horizons" and "understanding of truth."[4]

Many Canadian religious studies departments have adopted a broadly humanistic account of their mandate, a framework I endorse. By means of social scientific, historical, and textual methods, they examine the world's major religions and other religious dimensions of cultures. The UW Religious Studies website explains the discipline and department as follows: "Religious Studies introduces you to concerns as old as humanity, as broad as the world, as profound and mysterious as life itself. In studying religion in all its diversity, you encounter challenging systems of thought, exemplary lives, rituals both familiar and unfamiliar, and patterns of social life that have played central roles in the history of humankind."[5] While subtle, a humanistic orientation is evident in the critical experience of "unfamiliarity," the promise of content "profound and mysterious," as well as the potentially normative examination of "exemplary lives." The website further clarifies that while the department is nonconfessional, "Religious Studies invites you to explore the issues, questions, and ideas that arise in the study of religions and religious communities," presumably opening the classroom to discussions of the value, benefit, and even truth of these ideas.[6] The social benefit of this kind of critically sympathetic approach is noted by Carleton University's Department of Religion: "the study of Religion helps prepare students to be active citizens in a diverse democracy like Canada. It also nurtures in students a respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures."[7]

Though critics such as Donald Wiebe object that any study of religion that is directed toward "the moral welfare of the human race, or toward any ulterior end than that of knowledge itself" compromises the objectivity of the know-

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Brown, eds., *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002).

4 A. Edward Milton, "On the Relationship Between Confessional and Non-Confessional Religious Studies," in *Religious Studies: Issues, Prospects and Proposals*, ed. Klaus K. Klostermaier and Larry W. Hurtado (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 191.

5 http://religiousstudies.uwaterloo.ca/index.html, accessed February 15, 2013.

6 http://religiousstudies.uwaterloo.ca/about_us.html, accessed February 15, 2013.

7 www2.carleton.ca/chum/religion/, accessed February 19, 2013.

ledge sought,[8] his is a meta-discourse about the methods of advanced study and the structuring of institutions. While Wiebe's concerns would not be allayed, it makes a difference to consider the question from the perspective of undergraduate students and the experience of teaching such students. If my reflections have any contribution to make to that discussion, it is by attending to the link between how the on-the-ground reality of a religious studies classroom conditions and shapes Christian theology itself.

Barbara E. Walvoord has identified a "great divide" between those who teach religious studies courses and the students who take them. Faculty, myself included, frequently identify "critical thinking" as a primary course objective. This includes "analyzing the historical, cultural, linguistic, literary, political, and social contexts of religious beliefs and practices; critically evaluating arguments and points of view; and constructing one's own arguments about theological and religious issues, relying on reason, evidence, and logic."[9] The goals of students, however, are typically "to learn factual information, understand other religions and/or their own, and develop their own spiritual and religious lives."[10] In a public university setting such as my own, spiritual development cannot be, and is not, an objective of my courses. Instructors in similar settings are evidently aware of the goals many students have in religious studies courses—for example, the personal faith dimension is acknowledged, and qualified, on Memorial University of Newfoundland's Religious Studies website, suggesting that explicitly identifying it may be pedagogically beneficial: "The goal is not to enhance our own personal faiths, although this may be a welcome side benefit to some, but to explore faith and belief from the perspective of the liberal arts."[11] Part of the task, as I see it, is to make this "side benefit" possible for those who welcome it, while equipping all students to engage with the logic of Christian beliefs from a critical perspective. The question is: what does it mean to introduce and teach theology with integrity in such a setting?

No one is required to take my class; everyone is there by choice. It is not required for a religious studies major, even for one with a "Christian Traditions" specialization, nor a specific prerequisite for any higher level courses (which of course

8 Donald Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), xiii. He names the UW Religious Studies Department (its doctoral program specifically) as guilty of the "learned practice of religion" rather than a "genuine scientific agenda," given what he describes as its "practical social concerns" of training of public intellectuals. "The Learned Practice of Religion: A Review of the History of Religious Studies in Canada and Its Portent for the Future," *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses* 35 (2006): 492.

9 Barbara E. Walvoord, *Teaching and Learning in College Introductory Religion Courses* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 6.

10 Ibid.

11 www.mun.ca/relstudies/about/, accessed February 19, 2013.

presents challenges when I teach those classes). Indeed for students from faculties such as Engineering and Math who chose to enroll, it is one of the very few electives in their programs, and may be their only course in Arts. Walvoord's survey of student goals resonates with my experience. My sense is that students take my course to learn more about what, in most cases, is their own religious tradition, and to develop their own religious or spiritual lives. The overwhelming majority of students in my Introduction to Christian Theology classes identify themselves as Christian, either explicitly in class discussion, or explicitly or implicitly through written assignments. Perhaps a third to a half would identify as evangelical, and many are mainline Protestant or Roman Catholic. About ten percent are Mennonite. A very small number identify as agnostic, atheist, or having no religious belief. A small number, not usually more than two or three per class, have identified themselves as a member of another faith tradition: Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu.

Though I did not do this the first two times I taught the course, I now give a brief but explicit account of my own basic religious convictions, and how they relate to the classroom. I found that when I did not do this, some students were distracted by trying to decode where I was coming from. As one student later explained to me, her pastor had warned her that religious studies professors at the university would be atheists who would try to undermine her Pentecostal beliefs. It was obvious that I neither had this goal nor did it seem like I was an atheist, yet I did not discuss Christian beliefs in the same manner as her pastor. So, who was I?

I tell students that I am a Christian, active in a local Mennonite church (and in other church settings). This shapes my work as a theologian, but does not exhaust it. As a theologian, my task is to enter into the active conversation about what Christianity *is*, in both descriptive and prescriptive senses, and in light of its sources and ever-changing contexts, what it ought to be. Theology is analytical, argumentative, and sometimes experimental. I explain that the theology in which we will engage is neither indifferent to these communities nor comfortably at home in them. I recognize that such self-disclosure has benefits and pitfalls.[12] In particular, the power dynamic between instructor and student may create undue pressure on students to make similar disclosures. While I explicitly invite students to either be open about their religious convictions, or keep these to themselves, I also provide for anonymous feedback mechanisms to assist in monitoring such dynamics. I explain that students may engage in the discussion of Christian theology, including suggestions for its constructive direction, from a perspective of commitment, indifference, or skepticism about Christianity itself. They may name faith commitments that underlie particular views they express in class; they are also completely free and welcome to keep these to themselves. I explain that I do not intend to persuade

12 See Mark U. Edwards, Jr., "Why Faculty Find It Difficult to Talk About Religion," in *The American University in a Postsecular Age*, ed. Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 81–97.

or dissuade students of any religious or theological position, but I do expect them to develop their critical capacities with respect to the positions we will examine.

## Theology as a Discipline

The Latin root of the word reminds us that a discipline is a teaching or instruction. It is necessary for one to be led into the discourse that theology is. Some students will have had Christian catechesis or world religions in either church or high school settings; few if any have encountered theology as such. The course typically has about thirty students, and is primarily lecture and discussion. I follow my predecessor A. James Reimer in organizing the course systematically. I use a somewhat traditional outline of the theological loci—revelation, God/Trinity, creation, theological anthropology, sin, Jesus Christ, salvation, church and sacraments, Christian life and mission, non-Christian religions, and last things. Within that framework, we also attend to themes such as biblical interpretation, human disability as a lens into what it means to be human, the Holy Spirit and the environmental movement, martyrdom, church repentance for historical wrongs, and the New Monasticism movement.

The practice of theology has shape, but not a singular shape. There are different ways of inhabiting theology, and this becomes most evident in looking at actual theologians. I therefore begin the course by telling the stories of four different theologians who exemplify a variety of social locations from which theology may be done, and some of the dynamics of continuity and change that each effected. We examine Augustine (a fourth-century North African bishop whose recognition that God's grace must have been the primary agent of his conversion shaped his writings about the human will and divine grace), Julian of Norwich (a thirteenth-century English mystic who made creative use of feminine language for God in order to speak to her context of widespread human suffering), Karl Barth (a Protestant scholar inhabiting his study and the university lecture hall but whose singular focus on Jesus Christ had concrete political relevance in opposition to Nazism), and Dorothy Day (a lay Catholic whose conviction about the radical social and economic message of the gospel led her to found the Catholic Worker movement). This begins to show how deeply contextual theology is (without being reducible to context) and how dynamic it is.

Theology is neither the confession of Christian beliefs nor the description of Christian beliefs. Theology is not simply learning what different theologians have said, but being drawn into the practice of reasoning along with them and against them, and thereby contending for construals of Christian belief over against other possibilities. This makes it very difficult to actually *do* theology in an introductory setting. I cannot assume that students enter the course with any particular knowledge of the Bible or Christian doctrine. Though many have some general knowledge and a few know their Bibles very well, there are also some for whom Adam, Abraham, or the exodus from Egypt are simply unfamiliar, challenges that exist for those teaching theology in a wide variety of settings. Thus, I introduce students to

stories, concepts, and a "language," as a prerequisite to theology itself, even as debates about which stories and concepts to use are already the practice of theology.

I recognize that some of what I introduce to students will need to be significantly qualified, even unlearned, if they pursue further theological studies (though for many this will be their only theology course ever). I think this is inevitable. I cringe when I follow a textbook's lead on the difference between the supposed Western approach to the Trinity (starts with the unity of God) and the supposed Eastern approach (starts with the three-ness of God)—I know that this hypothesis has been called into question and at the very least is potentially misleading. Yet, there is a habit of analytical thought that the hypothesis may exhibit, as students begin to imagine how to see one basic Christian belief from different starting points, and the implications of such moves for the web of Christian claims.

## Theology as a Critical Discipline

It has been difficult to find the right textbook because many textbooks designed to introduce theology are primarily concerned with introducing Christian beliefs rather than initiating students into the practice of theology. One that does engage theologically, Daniel Migliore's *Faith Seeking Understanding*, has proven too advanced and too oriented to a seminary setting. Alister McGrath's short *Theology: The Basics*, and *Introduction to Theology* by Justo Gonzalez and Zaida Moldonado Perez are brief and fairly dry introductions to basic content. McGrath's much more extensive *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (now in fifth edition) is a somewhat unwieldy inventory of various positions and views theologians take. While he has university students in mind, idiosyncratic arguments abound on topics that leave the big picture aside.

For now, I have found that Ian S. Markham's *Introducing Christian Doctrine*[13] provides both basic knowledge of Christian beliefs (though with virtually no treatment of the themes of revelation or the Bible), and sustains several constructive arguments throughout the whole text. As I invite students to engage this text with me, I also demonstrate that theology is properly contested. Neither instructor nor textbook has the final word. For example, I am openly critical of Markham's commitment to natural theology, especially to a foundational role for proofs of God in theology. As a class, we also examine why he thinks this is so important. At the same time, he makes a persuasive case that Christian doctrine as a whole constitutes the most adequate "response" to the problem of evil. The tension I navigate here is to demonstrate myself (and not just report) how theology is a discipline with a stake in normativity. At the same time, I must communicate that I am not thereby trying to persuade students to hold any particular position for themselves.

In my experience, the student who does not have a personal commitment to Christian faith is not thereby excluded from a constructive discussion about the

13 Ian S. Markham, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

reshaping of particular Christian beliefs. Many are quite energized by the prospect that Christian beliefs are dynamic, and that theology welcomes debate about concepts such the fall, or what the atonement means. I use the analogy of a political science course to explain that critical thinking and constructive proposals may be advanced by those with various kinds of investment in the outcome. One could imagine that in a class on the relationship of voting policy to political engagement, an instructor could set up a debate about whether voting ought to be mandatory in Canada. Students could debate whether this policy ought to be pursued, even if they themselves are not Canadian citizens, and the "outcome" of the debate would not have a direct impact on them. (Though, since they are living in Canada, at least for now, Canada's political culture does affect them.)

Jeffrey Stout's concept of "immanent criticism" names this kind of process in which people with diverse religious commitments, for example, come together and give accounts of the reasons they hold particular views.[14] An evangelical Christian in my class thus may be invited by another student to explain why she holds a particular position, and she is free to respond by giving her reasons, which may include appeals to the Bible which her interlocutor might not accept as authoritative. The interlocutor may nevertheless raise fully valid objections by giving his own reasons, by pointing out contradictions in the first student's position, or by claiming that her premises logically lead to a conclusion other than the one she draws.

Some students with explicit Christian commitments do find it difficult to enter into the kind of reasoned exchange I have outlined above. One dynamic I constantly monitor is how language and assumptions made in class may be inhospitable to some students. I remind students about the different kinds of "we" language in the class. Using "we" on the assumption that everyone is Christian is unacceptably exclusive, though we do aim for a space in which one might talk about "we theologians." For some, true Christianity is definitive and may assume, for example, that *the* Christian approach to non-Christian religions *must* be exclusivism. To present other options such as inclusivism or pluralism as tenable Christian positions, while explaining that as a theologian one may legitimately contend that Christians ought to hold a particular view, is ultimately an exercise in imagining another's point of view, a key dimension of theology's mandate as a critical discipline. This is a key pedagogical challenge.

One student objected to an exam question, which I had given to the class in advance. The question required the student to first explain the critique that Sam Harris, an atheist whose "Manifesto" we studied in class, might make of Tripp York's constructive argument in *The Purple Crown: The Politics of Martyrdom* about the role of martyrdom in Christian discipleship, and then to propose how York might respond to Harris. The student explained that it would compromise his Christian faith and offend God to even imagine the world as an atheist would see it. Furthermore, since "doing becomes believing," such an exercise may ac-

14 Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 73.

tually be a path toward atheism. I was able to persuade the student to attempt the question on the exam. In part, I asked him to put himself in the shoes of non-Christians in the course who are required to try to understand arguments that particular Christian theologians make. I also pointed out that the exercise of truly understanding an atheist logic might have apologetic benefits. By engaging in immanent criticism myself, I hope to have helped this student begin the process of seeing his own faith convictions from the perspective of another.

## Theology as a Normative Discipline

A course on Christian theology may be treated as a course *about* theology, in which one learns and perhaps compares how/what various theologians have thought in the past. Indeed, to introduce students to theology, that dimension is necessary. Yet, in the same way that a course in physics cannot be content with simply learning what various physicists have thought about the world but presses toward judgement about the truth of various theories, so theology itself raises normative questions,[15] as do the students in my class. How can theology's truth question be engaged in a public university setting?

Academic theologians collectively invest little energy in asserting the truth of the whole. While these are often concerns of philosophers of religion, or those engaged specifically in apologetics, theologians are much more likely to debate contested statements within Christianity. Thus, theologians are more likely to engage the question of whether or not God is violent, and what either statement might mean, than whether or not God exists. Once it is evident that the debate about whether God is violent is vigorous among Christians, there is a point of entry for those who may not accept the existence of God or the Christian claims about who God is to nevertheless advance an argument based on what they can observe about the logic and coherence of the web of Christian beliefs. At the same time, the objections raised in class about the truth of the whole, or any basic Christian doctrine, rightly become theological questions in the classroom setting. The net effect is that, especially in discussion, different norms will obviously be in play. Some students will advance particular theological claims within an assumption of the truth of the whole, others may grant Christianity's hypothetical truth as a tactic within an argument about coherence ("surely Christians cannot hold that a loving God would have humans suffer just for the sake of their moral and spiritual development"), others will deny the credibility of specific beliefs on epistemological, moral, or other grounds. Needless to say, these discussions are necessarily unresolved.

In addition to a midterm and a final exam, students in the course write two essays. Since most are taking the course as the only one they will take in religious studies, I've decided that research skills are not as important as reading a given

15 Paul A. Macdonald, Jr., "Studying Christian Theology in the Secular University," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010): 1008–09.

text carefully, and developing a properly critical response to it. Thus, students write two essays in response to two chapters of the book *God Does Not … Entertain, Play "Matchmaker," Hurry, Demand Blood, Cure Every Illness*.[16] In each chapter, a theologian identifies what he or she claims is a misconception many Christians have about God. For the first essay, all students respond to Daniel Bell's argument that the atonement ought not to be regarded as an act of redemptive violence—God does not demand blood—as well as his proposal for how the cross may nevertheless be understood as decisive for salvation: Jesus still substitutes for sinful humanity. For the second essay, students may choose to respond to Joel Shuman's account of why thinking of God as a physician who responds to prayer requests for curing illnesses is to misconstrue God's healing.

In these assignments, students are required to demonstrate critical thinking and take a position. They must first give an accurate and fair account of the argument presented, and then assess that argument. This requires them to take a position on a disputed theological question and to do so whether or not they hold Christianity to be true as a whole. By engaging in an actual theological debate they also confront the reality that while God and all things in relation to God are the subject matter of theology, theology is *human* discourse about God. While normative in mode, theological writing is itself never simply settled nor identical with "the truth."

In the first question of his *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between theology as a human discipline and theology as sacred teaching. As a human discipline, theology consists in arguments made from its first principles by those who have developed the habits to do so. Thus Eugene Rogers argues that "theology is a skill that can be taught, gained by practice rather than conversion."[17] Theology as sacred teaching is a language that, in this life, "lacks native speakers, because those who possess its first principles as their own include only God and the blessed in heaven."[18] On the one hand, a Christian would recognize that the very existence of theology depends for its first principles on what she understands as God's revelation. One the other hand, since the human discourse about those principles is without native speakers on earth, it is useful for theology's sake that those who are Christians do not thereby assume their views are privileged, as if they are Spirit-inspired and others not. Thus, it may be that the public space of a classroom with students of different faiths and no faiths may be an especially *appropriate* location for the practice of theology.

16 D. Brent Laytham, ed., *God Does Not … Entertain, Play "Matchmaker," Hurry, Demand Blood, Cure Every Illness* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009).

17 Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., "Theology in the Curriculum of a Secular Religious Studies Department," *CrossCurrents* 56 (2006): 174.

18 Ibid., 176.

## Theology as a University Discipline

Sarah Coakley raises germane concerns about the kind of "university theology" advocated by scholars such as Ronald Thiemann of Harvard and Clark Gilpin of the University of Chicago. According to Coakley, both of these (former) divinity school deans advocate for the university theologian as a "'public intellectual' commenting on the place of 'religion' in the 'public sphere.'" They shy away from "robust theological claims," engagement with "doctrinal or creedal tradition," and, especially in Gilpin's case, discussion about the church or devotional practices. Against all of this, Coakley argues that some distinction of theology and religious studies is necessary for theology to truly address "questions of 'God', 'truth' and metaphysical ultimacy."[19]

Unlike the perspectives represented by Thiemann, Gilpin, and even Coakley, my classroom does not aspire to generate a coherent theological position. It is a given that students will think theologically from quite different perspectives, presuppositions, and commitments, but the goal is not to corral all of this into a single theological position. Does this mean that university theology is therefore disconnected from lives of faith, and discourse about God?

Paul Macdonald gives a persuasive account of how theology in a university setting may be connected with the church, even prayer, through the embodiment of the participants in the theological conversation. He writes: "But on the model I am proposing, the vital connection between the academic study of theology and its lived practice in the Church is *embedded* in the tradition-dependent, authority-based theological reasoning in which all members of the secular academy can participate; and more than that, is *embodied* in actual theological practitioners who inhabit the secular university and engage in such reasoning from the explicit standpoint of Christian faith."[20] To which, I must add, some will embody a range of standpoints including indifference and hostility to Christian faith, or commitment to a different religious tradition. Each student may be the bearer of a tradition or multiple traditions in the classroom.

Nicholas M. Healy proposes that academic theology be defined not in terms of bracketing faith commitments or the reality of God but in terms of the critical and constructive mediation of what he calls official theology and ordinary theology. Official theology has or claims authority in a particular tradition. It "may take the form of creeds, confessions, conciliar document, the works of founding theologians (e.g. Luther, Calvin), exemplary theologians (Augustine, Aquinas, the Fathers generally), denominational collections . . . and papal decrees,"[21] or perhaps the

19 Sarah Coakley, "Shaping the Field: A Transatlantic Perspective," in *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. David F. Ford, Ben Quash, and Janet Martin Soskice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48.

20 Macdonald, "Studying Christian Theology in the Secular University," 1020.

21 Nicholas M. Healy, "What Is Systematic Theology?" *International Journal of Systematic*

weekly sermon in more congregationalist settings. It tends toward an institutional perspective, is quite settled, and is not experimental. By contrast, ordinary theology is done by those without the responsibility of "teaching with authority." Ordinary theologies are the construals of Christianity by Christian believers who may not have formal training in theology but may bring their life experiences and expertise to bear. It develops especially as spiritual insights or intuitions run up against official perspectives.[22] Academic theology's remit, Healy proposes, is to place official and ordinary theology in a dialogue of mutual learning and correction.

In my class, official theology is nebulous, yet is identifiable both in the kinds of appeals some students make to authoritative sources, and in the narrative of a particular doctrine presented by the class textbook. Ordinary theology is evident in the construals of Christianity by students in the class, construals made by all regardless of religious conviction. Classroom space, at least in my aspiration, constantly seeks out a disciplined language by which to think carefully and critically about these trajectories, and to not simply be satisfied with the official or ordinary answers given.

Macdonald ultimately advocates for theology's legitimacy in the university and envisions how it may even function "harmoniously" within a religious studies setting. My goal in this chapter has not been to justify theology's inclusion but rather to reflect on what such theology looks like in the public university classroom. Yet, I do not believe it's a bad thing that I often struggle in class to find the right language to both model what it means to do theology, and teach about theology in a way that is truly hospitable to all students. I believe human discourse about God is always attempting to say that which ought to be noticed as unsayable. Furthermore, I appreciate the concern that colleagues in other university departments undoubtedly have about theology in the classroom. There is a legacy of Christian power and hegemony which needs to be unsettled. So if theology in the public university is in fact theology, then some persistent uneasiness is beneficial and necessary.

The process of putting together the present chapter has been a good exercise in taking stock. As I have reflected on past practice, I see the need to be even more intentional than I have been about focusing discussions around very specific normative theological questions. I acknowledge a need to develop more sophisticated feedback mechanisms whereby I get a more complete picture of how students are perceiving and engaging with the dynamics of the classroom, especially regarding the issue of religious commitments. I also recognize that my particular location at a public research university, teaching a class in which all faculties of the university are typically represented, is an opportunity to draw much more explicitly on the disciplinary expertise of students as we think together about God and all things in relation to God. Finally, I will integrate more non-Christian thinkers into the syl-

*Theology* 11 (2009): 27.

22 Ibid., 28–29.

labus, both those who are overt critics of Christianity (as I've already begun to do), and also those such as Slavoj Žižek, who more sympathetically shape it from the outside. As in the many other contexts in which Christian theology is taught, just how I teach in my setting will continue to be worked out much more in practice than in theory.

# Doing Theology as Self-Deceivers: Lessons from Blaise Pascal and Experimental Psychology

*Lexi Eikelboom*

In the seventeenth century, the mathematician Blaise Pascal did something out of the ordinary. While his contemporaries were using the scientific discoveries of their time to paint a comforting picture of human nature, Pascal used scientific and mathematical knowledge to unsettle his audience.[1] For most, the scientific advances of the seventeenth century represented a triumph of human knowledge. For Pascal, they represented humanity's deceptive overconfidence in its abilities. Scientific advances demonstrate that human knowledge is always incomplete. In the same way that reasonable people in the past believed things that are not true, we too continue to hold false assumptions about the nature of reality. For example, the invention of the microscope and the telescope has led to the discovery of ever smaller and larger phenomena previously unknown to humanity. This fact alone demonstrates the impossibility of the human mind's knowing the limits of reality, its largest or smallest components.[2] This is what Pascal calls the "disproportion of man." The human's natural mental abilities are not proportionate to the universe (contra Suarez, for example). Thus, mathematical exercises, scientific discoveries, and the advances of reason do not yield cognitive certainty. They demonstrate the limits of reason itself.[3]

Pascal was particularly interested in our tendency to overlook the logical con-

1 Matthew L. Jones, *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 133.

2 Ibid., 140.

3 Ibid., 132.

clusion that our scientific advances demonstrate the limits of our reason. Why do we tend to believe that what we perceive and experience are the limits of reality? That there exists nothing smaller or larger than we can see or imagine? Much of the *Pensées* is devoted to a demonstration of this failure to know ourselves, to see ourselves without self-deception.[4] Thus, scientific endeavours did not lead Pascal to adopt the sort of natural theology in which we are capable of simply deducing the nature of God from the nature of reality, since our knowledge of these things is not reliable. However, nor did Pascal shun scientific knowledge of the world and the self as irrelevant.

Human nature, for Pascal, is significant because it bears the most concentrated traces of the God that we have lost. Pascal's theological anthropology demonstrates the inconsistencies of human nature and our predilection for self-deception. He sees two natures in humanity. We are weak and wretched, following our instincts. We do not even follow our own self-interest consistently. Yet we hide our inconsistencies from ourselves. We do not merely accept our nature as a mixture of ill-fitted parts. We are thus wretched insofar as we prefer deception to thinking of ourselves reasonably. However, we do so because we are aware of the better state from which we have fallen, and because we desire such a better state.[5] Pascal believes that Christian doctrine best accounts for the strange paradox of our wretchedness and irrationality on the one hand, and for the longing for perfection that drives us on the other. Thus, "The true nature of man, his true good, true virtue and true religion are things which cannot be known separately."[6]

This is simply to say that Christian theology is responsible to narrate two intersecting stories simultaneously: the story of God and the story of humankind. The reality is that theology is not simply thoughts about God. It is composed of humans thinking about God, and of God revealing himself to humans. Theology is not only concerned with truth, but with how humans interact with that truth. This becomes particularly important given our tendency toward self-deception. The recently developed fields of cognitive science and experimental psychology have not only demonstrated that many of Pascal's observations regarding our self-deception are correct, they have also helped to refine those observations into more specific theories about the nature of our self-deception. The science available to us is a valuable resource in helping us to see ourselves rightly. Experimental psychology and cognitive science have yielded some rather unsettling insights into the nature of the people receiving God's self-revelation, the people behind the thoughts and words about him. In this essay I consider three such insights regarding our failure to know ourselves and the ways in which these insights contribute to a theological picture of human nature such as Pascal was attempting to depict.

4 Ibid., 149.

5 Blaise Pascal, *Pascal's Pensées*, trans. Martin Turnell (London: Harvill Press, 1962), 162.

6 Ibid., 120.

Certainly, much research in experimental psychological and cognitive science demonstrates the ways in which mental systems work together for a smooth, efficient, and accurate representation of ourselves and the world. The following investigation of self-deception is not intended to minimize these impressive operations. Rather, it is intended to tell a side of the story that is perhaps not considered in the literature as often as it should be. My intention is to demonstrate, as Pascal did, that we are a peculiar mixture of impressive systems and potentially self-destructive tendencies, and that such an anthropology is theologically significant.

## Self-deception #1: We Want to Know Ourselves

One of Pascal's greatest insights is that we do not really want to know ourselves. We want to love ourselves, but we know that the object of our love is full of faults. Thus, we destroy the truth of our imperfection as much as possible in our own consciousness.[7] However, what was for Pascal an insight based on casual observation of human behaviour has become a tested and confirmed aspect of human cognition. The fact that we do not really want to know ourselves has proved to be a particularly obstinate component of human nature.

Constantine Sedikides (1993) has conducted an experiment in which he compared the strength of motivation for self-assessment, self-enhancement, and self-verification. His intent was to unearth the "motivational determinants of the self-evaluation process."[8] While each of these motivations had previously been tested for individuals, they had not to this point been experimentally compared. Sedikides reports that most of the literature until his experiment had suggested that accurate self-knowledge is the primary motive of self-evaluation.[9]

Sedikides's study was expansive, including five pilot studies and six experiments. The former determined traits that participants believed to be central or peripheral to their collective self-concept, which were then used in the experiments. The pilot studies also served to compile a list of questions that were either high or low in diagnosticity. High-diagnosticity questions were those participants believed would provide accurate information about the possession of a trait, whereas low-diagnosticity questions would not.[10] In the experiments, participants reflected on traits that were either central or peripheral and were either positive or negative.[11] Sedikides used four different methods for inducing participants to reflect on their personality traits. Experiments one, two, and three compared self-enhancement to

7 Pascal, *Pensées*, L978/S743.

8 Constantine Sedikides, "Assessment, Enhancement, and Verification Determinants of the Self-evaluation process," in vol 1. of *Social Psychology: Critical Concepts in Psychology,* ed. Richard J. Crisp (New York: Routledge, 2011), 102.

9 Ibid., 135.

10 Ibid., 110.

11 Ibid., 111.

self-assessment motives. These involved a task in which participants chose questions to determine whether they possessed a certain trait, and also generated their own questions for determining possession of a certain trait.[12] Half of the available questions had high diagnosticity, which refers to a high ability of the question to determine the possession of a trait. The other half of the questions were rated at a low diagnosticity.[13] The choosing of higher diagnosticity questions indicated a desire for accurate self-knowledge because these are the questions that are most accurately able to determine the possession of a trait. Experiment four attended to the self-verification motive by comparing participants' self-reports for possessing traits with the generating of questions for determining the possession of a trait.[14] The fifth experiment was a modification of the first, in which participants were explicitly told to be as accurate and objective as possible in selecting questions.[15] The final experiment asked half of the participants to reflect on traits belonging to the self, while the second half were asked to reflect on traits pertaining to an acquaintance.[16]

Sedikides found that, contrary to the predictions of previous literature, the desire for accurate self-knowledge is the weakest of the three possible motivations that were tested, with self-enhancement being the strongest. Participants regularly chose or invented high-diagnosticity questions when determining whether or not they possessed a positive trait, whereas they chose or invented low-diagnosticity questions when determining whether they possessed a negative trait. This indicates that "subjects wished to discover that they possessed central positive traits to a greater extent than central negative traits."[17] The more peripheral the trait, that is the less central to self-concept, the less this pattern applied. Further, participants "confirmed the possession of positive traits" and "disconfirmed possession of negative traits, a pattern consistent with the self-enhancement view."[18] Significant here is the fact that not only did participants tend to see themselves in a more positive light, but they actively sought out positive self-evaluations and avoided negative self-evaluations. The implication is that we tend to seek out positive self-evaluations rather than accurate self-evaluations.[19] That participants preferred to have positive self-knowledge rather than accurate self-knowledge suggests that they

12 Ibid., 111.

13 Ibid., 114.

14 Ibid., 127.

15 Ibid., 130.

16 Ibid., 133.

17 Ibid., 121.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 138. The third possible motivation, self-verification, refers to the desire to confirm a previously-accepted evaluation of the self, whether positive or negative. This motive was weaker than the desire for self-enhancement, but was a stronger motive than accurate self-knowledge.

preferred to remain deceived about certain qualities and characteristics. We do not really want to know ourselves.

Many cognitive theories attempt to explain some of the reasons for this tendency. Attention, perception, and memory are all known to be selective in nature, and the self or self-concept acts as a useful central device around which information is attended to, collected, and recollected. The self therefore becomes the measure of attention, perception, and memory as an organizational device.[20] Daniel Goleman makes the argument that the selectivity of attention also functions as a way of reducing cognitive pain. The mind avoids information that is too emotionally difficult to assimilate by unconsciously dimming attention.[21] This dimming of attention includes "avoid[ing] acquiring information that would make vague fears specific enough to require decisive action."[22] If we apply this to Sedikides's study, it would seem that the tendency to avoid information that would make vague fears more specific applies not least to fears regarding the self, leading to self-deception with regard to one's own nature.

An example of this is the research done in attribution theory. It is generally accepted that we attribute our success to internal factors, while we attribute our failure to extrinsic factors. That is, we believe ourselves to be responsible for our success, but not for our failure, preferring to attribute it to circumstances or luck.[23] While this may not necessarily be motivational in nature, D. T. Miller (1976) has made a strong case for self-enhancement as motivation for these attribution tendencies. If we are causally responsible for our positive behaviour, it serves to enhance our self-concept.[24] Similarly, the tendency to attribute failure to circumstances may serve a self-protective function. If we put a lot of effort into a task but find that it does not result in success, we tend to attribute the cause of the failure to extrinsic factors rather than to our own effort.[25] To believe that all of our work, as well-intentioned as it was, resulted in failure would be a very cognitively painful belief. Thus, as Goleman suggests, we do not allow our vague fears about our own efforts and behaviour to be made specific, attributing the cause of failure to extrinsic factors instead.

Nevertheless, while there are many theories to account for how and why we

20 Daniel Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truth: The Psychology of Self-Deception* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 97. Goleman here cites Greenwald's synthesis of experimental results concerning the egocentric nature of mental life.

21 Ibid., 21.

22 Ibid., 19.

23 Harold H. Kelly and John L. Michela, "Attribution Theory and Research," in vol. 1 of *Social Psychology: Critical Concepts in Psychology*, ed. Richard J. Crisp (New York: Routledge, 2011), 226.

24 Ibid., 231.

25 Ibid., 232.

engage in self-enhancing self-deception, a more surprising and overlooked part of Sedikides's experiment is his finding that the self-enhancement motive was impervious to simple instructions to "avoid self-enhancement" or to be "as objective as possible,"[26] suggesting that participants were unaware of their self-enhancement. They believed in their own objectivity. Notice as well that previous literature predicted that the desire for accurate self-knowledge is the primary motivating factor for self-evaluation, suggesting a more general belief in individual objectivity. These two facts imply that we deceive ourselves with regard to our objectivity. Not only do we prefer to have positive self-knowledge rather than accurate self-knowledge, suggesting that we prefer to remain deceived about some of our characteristics, but we also believe ourselves to be less self-deceptive than we really are.

Sedikides, in advising his participants to be as objective as possible, was essentially requesting that participants separate out their personal emotions about themselves from their rational decisions about the diagnosticity of any given question. The reality, of course, is that while we believe that we are able to separate emotion from reason, our reason is in fact made up of the cooperation of the prefrontal cortices and "lower-level" brain regions: reason and emotion.[27] Without emotion we cannot reason. Emotion will always enter into our decisions, for good or ill.[28] Antonio Damasio suggests that it is as though "we are possessed by … a drive that originates in the brain core, permeates other levels of the nervous system, and emerges as either feelings or nonconscious biases to guide decision making."[29] If you remove this drive, you do not master reason. The key lies, rather, in crafting or forming the feelings and biases that guide decision making. The question becomes whether there is a way to form our feelings in such a way that we want to know our true nature. We will explore this question in the following sections.

As Pascal has intimated, and as Sedikides's experiment corroborates, science and reason demonstrate our inability to know ourselves objectively, or to even want to know ourselves objectively. Sedikides's study strengthens the basic Barthian point that since we do not really know ourselves as we are, nor do we want to, we cannot deduce the nature of human flourishing, let alone the nature of God, from our own human nature, desires, and inclinations.

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26 Sedikides, "Assessment, Enhancement, and Verification Determinants of the Self-evaluation process," 139.

27 Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1994), xiii.

28 Ibid. The fact that we cannot separate emotion from reason has been demonstrated by the case of Phineas Gage as well as several, more recent cases of brain damage to certain areas of the prefrontal cortices. Damasio found that the effect of this brain damage was that the patient no longer experienced emotion. However, this also had a profound effect on the ability of the patient to make rational decisions.

29 Ibid., 245.

## Self-deception #2: We Act Out Of Our Convictions When Making Important Moral Decisions

In his essay "Axiology, Self-deception, and Moral Wrongdoing in Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*," William D. Wood argues that Pascal's "most important contribution to ethical theory lies in his account of how and why we fail to live up to our ethical intuitions."[30] Arguably, the most unsettling experiment conducted in the short history of experimental psychology is a similar account of how and why we fail to live up to our ethical intuitions: Stanley Milgram's experiment regarding obedience to authority. In the well-known experiment, the participant is told to carry out a series of acts that increasingly conflict with her conscience.[31] The participant believes herself to be participating in an experiment on punishment and learning. She believes that she randomly selects the role of "teacher," while another subject selects the role of "learner." The teacher is told to shock the learner every time he makes an error, increasing the voltage each time. In reality, however, the learner is an actor and receives no shocks.[32] The teacher and learner are separated so that they can hear but not see one another. Present in the room with the participant is an experimenter in a lab coat. The experiment is set up such that as the voltage increases the learner begins to protest, eventually screaming in pain.[33] When the participant begins to refuse to shock the learner, the experimenter responds with four phrases: "Please continue," "The experiment requires that you continue," "It is absolutely essential that you continue," and finally "You have no other choice, you must go on." If the participant continues to refuse to proceed after the final response, the experiment is stopped. Otherwise it is ended only after the participant has shocked the learner three times at the highest voltage.[34]

Sixty-five percent of participants administered the final shock, although all protested and many exhibited signs of severe stress. Milgram reports that "despite the fact that many subjects experience stress, despite the fact that many protest to the experimenter, a substantial proportion continue to the last shock on the generator."[35] Furthermore, no participants insisted that the experiment itself be terminated, nor did they leave the room to check on the learner without permission, even after the experiment had been completed.[36] While there have been objections to

30 William D. Wood, "Axiology, Self-deception, and Moral Wrongdoing in Blaise Pascal's *Pensées,*" *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 37, no. 2 (2009): 362.

31 Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (London: Pinter & Martin, 1997), 21.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 22.

34 Ibid., 38.

35 Ibid., 23.

36 Philip Zimbardo, Foreword, to Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, xv.

Milgram's methodology, many replications and variations of the experiment have been conducted, all with similar results. The experiment, or one like it, has been conducted in various countries and has tested for variations in gender, socioeconomic status, and education, with little change in results.[37] The implication is that under certain conditions, when making very important moral decisions, we do not act out of our convictions. In fact, Milgran even suggests that we have the capacity to abandon our morality in the service of a social institution or an ideology like "science."[38]

This is what Ervin Staub calls "Moral Equilibration." The theory suggests that when conflict between moral values and other factors occurs, one can replace the moral factor with either a less stringent moral factor or a non-moral value, such as obedience or "the good of science."[39] Milgram writes:

> Many of the subjects, at the level of stated opinion, feel quite as strongly as any of us about the moral requirement of refraining from action against a helpless victim. They, too, in general terms know what ought to be done and can state their values when this occasion arises. This has little, if anything, to do with their actual behaviour under the pressure of circumstances. The force exerted by the moral sense of the individual is less effective than social myth would have us believe. Moral factors can be shunted aside with relative ease by a calculated restructuring of the informational and social field.[40]

Before he began the experiment, Milgram conducted several tests in which he asked respondents how they believed they would behave in such a study. All believed they would disobey the experimenter at some point in the study.[41] This discrepancy can be easily explained in terms of the first self-deception that we considered. We tend to believe ourselves to be better than we really are. So, Milgram asked respondents how they thought others would behave. They all believed that only a very small percentage would continue on to administer the final shock.[42] Finally, Milgram described his experiment to a group of psychiatrists, who, on average, predicted that less than one percent of participants would shock the learner at the highest level.[43] In reality, however, approximately two-thirds of the participants continued to the maximum level of shock. What I want to draw our attention to here is not so much the fact that most of us will act against our moral convictions under certain

37 Ibid., 187, 189, 208.

38 Ibid., 205.

39 Ervin Staub, "The Psychology of Bystanders, Perpetrators, and Heroic Helpers," in *Understanding Genocide*, eds. Leonard S. Newman and Ralph Erber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22.

40 Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, 24.

41 Ibid., 45.

42 Ibid., 48.

43 Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Bad* (London: Rider, 2007), 271.

circumstances, but the fact that we believe we will act according to our convictions under those same circumstances. The discrepancy between the polls taken and the actual outcome of the experiment suggests that we likely do not act out of our convictions as often as we think we do.

One of the large differences between those who resisted malignant authority and those who obeyed consisted in their attribution of responsibility. Those who resisted continuing with the experiment attributed more responsibility to themselves than to the experimenter or the learner, whereas those who continued with the experiment did the opposite.[44] Looking at the reality of what they were doing without self-justification incited them to stop, whereas maintaining that they were a good person and not responsible for the harm done to the other person led them to continue.

Milgram's experiment is fascinating from many angles, but for our purposes here it raises questions about the relationship between our behaviour and our theological convictions. Could it be the case that while we believe ourselves to be living life out of our theological convictions, our choices and behaviour are often reactions to immediate circumstances instead? If the attribution explanation is correct, then it is precisely the illusion that we are good people, whether because we are Christian or for some other reason, that will lead us to perform unjust actions in those situations where we believe we would act justly. On the other hand, belief in our own fallibility and tendency toward self-deception is that which incites us to question our behaviour and put an end to unjust behaviour more quickly. This brings us back to the question raised earlier: "Is there a way for us to acquire such a perspective of ourselves if we are in fact prone to self-deception?" The final way in which we deceive ourselves will go some way to providing an answer to this question.

As an aside, however, in his book on the experiment, Milgram describes the experience of certain individuals in the study, one of whom is a professor of Old Testament who participated in a modification of the study in which learner and teacher were in the same room. In this modified study, a slightly higher number of subjects broke off the experiment, including the Old Testament professor.[45] This does not necessarily suggest that persons who are engaged in a religious vocation or who teach the Bible or theology are more likely to disobey, malign authority, or act out of their convictions. If he had participated in the original experiment, the professor may not have disobeyed. Nevertheless, his response in the debrief is telling. When asked what the most effective way of enhancing resistance to malign authority is, the professor responded by saying, "If one had as one's ultimate authority God, then it trivializes human authority." The answer is not the repudiation

44 Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, 205.

45 Ibid., 57, 205–206.

of all authority, but the substitution of good authority for inhumane authority.[46] It was relatively easy for those participants who carried through with the experiment to absolve themselves of responsibility because there was an authority present on whom the responsibility could be placed. However, in recognizing a higher authority to which one is regularly accountable, any other authority must then contend with this higher authority. If we think of ourselves as autonomous, we cannot know ourselves because we have no other perspective than that of our deceived one. However, in making ourselves dependent on the grace of God, we are granted another perspective of ourselves and our situation against which other authorities, perspectives, ideologies, and causes are made relative. Submission to an external perspective is therefore a partial answer to the question of how we can think of ourselves rightly, namely as fallible, such that we are more likely to question the goodness of our own behaviour. This is why theology is responsible to narrate two intersecting stories simultaneously, one about the nature of humanity and the other about the nature of God.

## Self-deception #3: If We Believe Our Behaviour To Be Wrong, We Will Repent And Change

In 1957, Leon Festinger published his theory of cognitive dissonance. As with the other studies we have considered, the theory represented a threatening counter-current to the dominant ideologies of social psychology at the time, not least because of its unflattering portrayal of human cognition. The theory states that "dissonance, that is, the existence of non-fitting relations among cognitions, is a motivating factor in its own right … which leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction."[47] "Cognitions" refers to any beliefs or convictions about the self, the world, or one's behaviour.[48] If dissonance occurs, for example, between a cognition about oneself (I am an honest person) and a cognition about one's behaviour (I just told a lie), psychological discomfort ensues and the individual is motivated to reduce the discomfort in some way. In order to do so, the individual alters either of the cognitions. She may simply alter her belief in her honesty and confess the lie, or she may change her private beliefs to match her public statement so that she has not told a lie at all.[49] However, some cognitions are more resistant to alteration than others. For example, if one feels that a behaviour or decision is wrong, it is very unusual for that behaviour to be revoked, because doing so would increase dissonance.[50] Revoking a lie is also an admission to having lied, which is dissonant with one's belief that one is an honest person. Furthermore,

46 Ibid., 66.

47 Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston Ill: Row & Peterson, 1957), 3.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., 95.

50 Ibid., 43.

publicly committed behaviour is often more resistant to change than a privately held belief.[51] Since we tend to reduce dissonance by changing the cognition that is the least resistant to change, the more frequent means of reducing dissonance include changing our beliefs or attitudes, or reducing those attitudes in importance, thereby making those cognitions more consonant with our behaviour.[52]

For example, Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) performed an experiment in which they required participants to undertake a very dull task, such that participants had a moderately negative opinion of the task. Those participants in the control condition confirmed on a survey that their opinion of the task was indeed slightly negative. Those participants who were not in the control condition were told after the task that the experiment was a comparison between those who had no knowledge about the task and those who were told about the task in advance. However, the assistant who was usually responsible for telling the participants in group B about the task could not make it that day. The experimenter thus proceeded to request that he hire the participant to do the task of the assistant who had not appeared, namely telling the next participant about the task. This "next participant" was in fact a confederate. The job included the requirement that the participant mislead the confederate with respect to the task's being enjoyable. Festinger and Carlsmith say that when the confederate protested that her friend had told her the task was boring, most subjects responded by saying something like "Oh no, it's really interesting. I'm sure you'll enjoy it."[53] The participant was thus required to lie about his opinion of the task. The participant was then given a survey in which he was asked several questions about how enjoyable the task was. In comparison to the control condition, these participants rated the task as being significantly more enjoyable. Festinger and Carlsmith explain this by stating that the easiest way to directly reduce the cognitive dissonance induced by the act of lying about the enjoyability of the task is to persuade oneself that the task was in fact enjoyable.[54]

Participants in the Festinger and Carlsmith experiment thus participated in dissonance reduction through the changing of opinion. However, it might be objected that participants in this study had few alternatives once they had agreed to the task. However, we witness a similar form of dissonance reduction in Milgram's experiments where stopping the experiment was an alternative possibility. Milgram believes that this drive to reduce dissonance accounts for part of the reason that his participants continued to shock the learner to the highest voltage. He states:

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51 Joel Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty Years of a Classic Theory* (London: SAGE, 2007), 85.

52 Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, 44–47, 95; Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance*, 8.

53 Leon Festinger and James M. Carlsmith, "Cognitive Consequences of Forced Compliance," *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 58* (1959):206.

54 Ibid., 207.

> The recurrent nature of the action demanded of the subject itself creates binding forces. As the subject delivers more and more painful shocks, he must seek to justify to himself what he has done; one form of justification is to go to the end. For if he breaks off, he must say to himself: 'Everything I have done to this point is bad, and I now acknowledge it by breaking off.' But, if he goes on, he is reassured about his past performance. Earlier actions give rise to discomforts, which are neutralised by later ones. And the subject is implicated into destructive behaviour in piecemeal fashion.[55]

In order to reduce the dissonance between their behaviour and their belief in themselves as individuals who do not harm innocent persons, Milgram found that the participants engaged in justifying their behaviour by altering their belief about the victim's innocence:

> Many subjects harshly devalue the victim as a consequence of acting against him. Such comments as, 'He was so stupid and stubborn he deserved to get shocked,' were common. Once having acted against the victim, these subjects found it necessary to view him as an unworthy individual, whose punishment was made inevitable by his own deficiencies of intellect and character.[56]

Glass too performed a study in 1964 which achieved similar results to that of Milgram. Persons who shocked others evaluated their victims as deserving of the shocks in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance that comes with harming an innocent person.[57]

The theory of cognitive dissonance tells us something we already know: repentance, admitting we are wrong, is very uncomfortable. We do not take responsibility for our behaviour and try to make amends because this behaviour would threaten our self-concept. Thus, in order to restore cognitive consistency and reduce psychological discomfort, we engage in distortions of our cognitions. We deceive ourselves with regard to our own goodness, even by making others look worse. "Over 1,000 published studies … show that when behaviour is inconsistent with attitudes and beliefs, people reduce the inconsistency by changing their attitudes, so that they are consistent with the discrepant behaviour."[58] Festinger observed that revoking a decision causes more dissonance because the behaviour then comes into conflict with other cognitions, some of which are related to our self-concept.

Since Festinger, psychologists have begun to consider in more detail the rela-

55 Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, 167.

56 Ibid., 27.

57 D. Glass, "Changes in Liking as a Means of Reducing Cognitive Discrepancies Between Self-esteem and Aggression" *Journal of Personality 32* (1964): 531–549.

58 Bertram Gawronski and Fritz Strack, *Cognitive Consistency: A Fundamental Principle in Social Cognition* (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 326.

tionship between cognitive dissonance and self-concept. In any given situation, people may measure their behaviour against their own self-concept (I am an honest person) or against a consensual normative standard, whether cultural or religious (I ought not to lie).[59] A behaviour that is dissonant with cognitions surrounding self-concept and norms represents a threat to that self-concept. This is especially the case when an individual performs a behaviour that she perceives as freely chosen and feels responsible for, yet cannot justify.[60] Reducing the dissonance through attitude change renders that threat benign because it provides such a justification.[61]

Pascal's understanding of self-deception bears some striking resemblances to Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance. Pascal suggests that our minds give rise to spontaneous moral judgements, but that we often disregard these moral judgements by engaging in self-deceptive moral reasoning both in order to permit ourselves to undertake an action that is attractive but immoral, but also in order to convince ourselves that our immoral actions are not in fact immoral,[62] as with cognitive dissonance. Thus, "our imaginative fantasies give us a way to preserve an image of ourselves as morally upright and blameless, even when we are not."[63] For Pascal, this tendency is motivated by desire, particularly by the desire of the human to hide its undesirable traits from itself and others. He states that the human "would like to do away with this truth, and not being able to destroy it as such, it destroys it, as best it can, in the consciousness of itself and others and it cannot bear to have them pointed out or noticed."[64] While this is a more pessimistic interpretation than that offered by theories of cognitive dissonance, there is nevertheless a resemblance between Pascal's human's inability to bear having its faults pointed out, and the psychological discomfort caused by cognitive dissonance. In fact, this understanding of self-deception bears particular resemblance to Ziva Kunda's (1990) theory of motivated reasoning, which suggests that the motivation to hold a particular belief leads to a process of reasoning in service to that motivation. She says that "We know the attitude that we desire to have, and we engage in a search of our past behaviours, statements, and opinions to find evidence that the new

59 This is a synthesis of the self-affirmation theory, which argues that behaviour is dissonant when it is inconsistent with what good/honest people do (normative) and the self-consistency theory, which argues that behaviour is dissonant when it is inconsistent with the self-concept that one has of oneself. See Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty Years of a Classic Theory*, 107.

60 Michael R. Leippe and Donna Eisenstadt, "Self-persuasion When it Matters to Self: Attitude Importance and Dissonance Reduction After Counterattitudinal Advocacy," in *The Scientist and the Humanist: A Festschrift in Honour of Elliot Aronson,* eds. Gonsalez, Tavris, and Aronson (Hove, UK: Psychology Press ltd., 2007), 177.

61 Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance*, 116.

62 Wood, "Axiology, Self-Deception and Moral Wrongdoing in Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*," 367–368.

63 Ibid., 370.

64 Pascal, *Pensées*, L978/S743.

attitude is really one we have had all along."[65]

This raises another aspect of self-deception that Pascal has pointed to, namely habit. We learn from the theory of cognitive dissonance that not only do attitudes influence behaviour, but our behaviour can influence our attitudes as well,[66] and this effect becomes compounded over time. In Milgram's and Glass's experiments in which participants justified their harming of the victim by believing that he or she deserved it, the formation of this attitude through behaviour would allow the harming behaviour to continue, thus reinforcing the attitude, and so on. This is the way in which habit is formed. Pascal too suggests that what he calls the "imagination," those attitudes that are responsible for evaluation of objects, behaviour, and self, is constructed by the self, because it is made up of those attitudes that have been reinforced and thus solidified into habit.[67]

At the cognitive level, this is described as the "probability landscape." The probability that we will perform an action is dependent upon the current interactions between neurons and other physiological and mental factors. However, this is not merely a one-way relationship. Not only do the interactions of the smaller components determine the agent's behaviour at the higher level, but the higher-level behaviour has a top-down effect on the organization of the probability landscape.[68] Thus, each action will increase the probability of my performing that action again, not only because of the change in attitudes it creates through cognitive dissonance and other mechanisms, but also because of the physical change of the neurological landscape. The formation of habit is thus neurologically explained by the fact that "self-organized systems tend to have shallower topographies at the beginning but to lock in features over time, creating deeper attractors and higher separatrices. This explains the fact that people's character becomes more set with age."[69]

In that part of the *Pensées* often known as "The Wager," Pascal's exhortation is not to belief, but simply to take on the habits of attending mass, confession, and prayer,[70] because it is these habits which, over time, form belief. This is precisely the answer that I want to offer to the above question of how we might cultivate a desire to know ourselves rightly and to see ourselves as fallible. Our thoughts about ourselves and the world are derived from our actions and the way in which we cognitively and neurologically respond to those actions. The difficulty is that we readily engage in habits of self-protection and self-deception. But repentance itself can be a habit. The reason it is so difficult is because it is not one. We know that repentance

65 Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance*, 85.

66 Leippe and Eisenstadt, "Self-persuasion . . ." 178.

67 Wood, "Axiology, Self-Deception and Moral Wrongdoing in Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*," 366.

68 Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Persepctives on Sin and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 264.

69 Ibid., 265.

70 Pascal, *Pascal's* Pensées, 204.

is not often a habit precisely because, as Festinger and Milgram demonstrate, it is painful because it threatens rather than sustains our self-concept. Reducing the discomfort of repentance is therefore a matter of changing our self-concept to include notions of moral failure, sin, and the necessity of repentance. However, this brings us back to Sedikides's study. We do not really want to include these concepts in our self-understanding. It is something that must be learned through the act of repentance itself. The problem of self-deception is a circular one. This is why we must first simultaneously acknowledge ourselves as self-deceivers and acknowledge the grace of God as a perspective outside ourselves which might enable us to escape from the circle of self-deception. Ultimately, this means making repentance a regular practice, which will enable us to grow the humility and courage to see ourselves rightly.

## Conclusion

This essay has perhaps made the obvious point that our desires are not of themselves rightly ordered. We do not want to see ourselves honestly or repent of our wrongdoing. Nor are we capable of desiring and doing the good that we know is right, even in those situations where we think we would. But this is not to suggest that our situation is hopeless. My intention in this essay has been the same as Pascal's, that in exposing some of the self-deceptive tendencies that influence all humans, including Christians and Christian scholars, we might recognize our inadequacy to that to which we are called—a life of truth and humility—and that we might be moved to be a little more humble, courageous, and dependent upon the grace of God.

# Afterword

# Afterword

*Paul Dyck*

I here offer a few words of testimony. This volume itself testifies to the remarkable range of people moved to respond to Gerald's work and to the larger project of Canadian Mennonite University, and also to the remarkable range of activities within CMU itself. What I will add as an editor of this volume and a member of CMU is not an intellectual verification, but rather a word of first-hand witness to the university itself.

As it happens, I first sat down to write this afterward in the Shi'a holy city of Qom, Iran, a place I never expected to visit. I start this way in order to point out that to be part of Canadian Mennonite University is to be on a strange trajectory. Harry Huebner and I have gathered this collection of essays about CMU as a tribute to Gerald Gerbrandt's career, a career grounded in the study of Scripture but largely exercised in the administration of the university. What better way to honour the man than to reflect on that project to which he has devoted so much of his life?

Gerald's expression of CMU's identity—a university of the church for the world—aptly captures my experience of the place, and my journey to Iran. I am not a professor of world religions or of peacemaking; I study the literature of England of centuries past. What brought me to Persia, though, was the connection between CMU and the International Institute of Islamic Studies and our hosting of each other in short courses. We were there to learn about Islam, and along the way, I also discovered the Persian poets, Hafez and Ferdowsi, and so it goes.

One point, then, is that a university of the church for the world is a rich space for university work, even if—or perhaps especially when—that space is found along oblique lines, perhaps the "borderland fecundity" that David Wiebe talks about in his chapter in this volume. One can no doubt find such rich and un-

expected spaces in many universities. My point, though, is that CMU has been and is such a place, and this is no insignificant thing. CMU has been, for the most part, both a profoundly homey and a delightfully strange place to me since 2000, when a friend in graduate school suggested I apply for a new English position at a new university. I was raised Mennonite Brethren, then Christian and Missionary Alliance, before following my seventeenth-century mentor, George Herbert, into the Anglican church, and then, out of the blue, called back into a Mennonite community-as-university. I did my best to appear strange, highlighting my Anglican practices at the job interview and in my first year on campus, but was met with enthusiastic interest at every turn. I found a place with an evangelical sense of the importance and even urgency of the Gospel and also the commitment to and room for thought that I had always loved about my university experience. CMU is of course far from perfect at either, but the combination was just what I was looking for, and has sustained me in my life here.

CMU is a community devoted to faithfully following Jesus Christ, and in that following, manages (at least some of the time!) to be open-handed, to not grasp control, but to encounter the stranger with hospitality, whether that stranger is found in a troubling novel or a far-off part of the world. In fact, I had my most surprising experience in Iran on one evening when we were hosted by a seminary student and his wife. We were all in their apartment in the suburbs of Qom, filling their living room: the hosts, a few of us from CMU, and a few other local seminary students who had taken summer courses at CMU. As we sat eating and talking, it gradually dawned on me that I felt at home, and that I felt at home because we had CMU in common. The Iranians were, of course, practicing their own remarkable hospitality, and we were the honoured guests. But there was also a deeper commonality: once we were off on our own as a group, without any agenda, we relaxed and enjoyed each other's presence. My point is not that such unexpected kinship is unique to CMU; rather, it had nothing to do with my own virtue or control. It was a CMU moment and all there was for me to do was to acknowledge the gift.

I have done just enough administrative work to understand how much a good president works behind the scenes, tending to the substructure so that the part everyone sees can function. As Ernest Hemingway once said about writing, the story is like an iceberg: the dignity with which it moves is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. Likewise, the seeming ease with which faculty and students can come together to read, calculate, experiment, and perform belies the massive efforts it takes to make such things possible. This is not, of course, to deny that the president's role is highly public, but rather to acknowledge the extraordinary importance of the president's role in guiding the university into its calling. Gerald may be uncomfortable with this picture and will hasten to emphasize the community effort involved in the daily operation of CMU. He will be right, of course, and he will simultaneously further illustrate my point.

Joining CMU, I have stepped into—among other things—a lifetime of questions about the Christian university. From time to time, colleagues at public uni-

versities wonder if and how I am really free to do the kind of work they themselves do, under the strictures of the church. And other Christians alternately wonder either the same thing or whether, as a university, we are actually Christian. I'm not particularly good at answering such questions. One of the greatest things I have taken from Gerald, though, is that the ready-made questions are rarely the right ones. There is finally no better answer to the question "Why is CMU involved in Iran?" than the answer that these particular Iranians are the people who have arrived to us as neighbour, as the word is used in Luke 10:29. No other agenda makes sense. Thinking about CMU more broadly, we could ask "Why do CMU at all?" The place is—rightly—fitting for many ends, many identifiable results, but under the leadership of Gerald and now of Cheryl Pauls, the university has existed for reasons deeper than results.

Another thing Gerald showed me and occasionally spoke to (though here in my words) is that the freedom of the university is not found in its freedom from the church, but rather, that which we hope for in the university is more profoundly grounded in the hopes of the church. Having a university of the church does not so much put strange demands on the university, but rather on the church itself. CMU does not, in this way of thinking, ask bigger questions than the church can, but rather, exercises the church as a faithful, searching community. CMU is not a university with a dogmatic overlay; it is a university grounded and growing in the life of the church. This volume has provided a sampling by which our fruits can be tasted and discerned.

# Contributors

# Contributors

*David T. Barnard* is President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manitoba. He was previously at the University of Regina (Vice-President [Administration], then President) and at Queen's University (Professor of Computing and Information Science and several administrative roles). In 2005–08 he was Chief Operating Officer of iQmetrix. He holds BSc, MSc, and PhD degrees (computer science; University of Toronto), a DipCS (Christian studies; Regent College, University of British Columbia), and an LLM (Osgoode Hall, York University).

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*Earl Davey* holds a PhD from the University of Toronto and was a longstanding member of the Faculty of Music at Brandon University, where he worked in the areas of conducting, philosophy of music, and philosophy of music education. Throughout his tenure there he was music director of the Brandon University Chorale, a select ensemble specializing in the European chamber repertoire of the seventeenth through twentieth centuries. Subsequently, he held the position of Vice-President Academic at Assiniboine College in Brandon, Manitoba, and Provost and Vice-President Academic at Tyndale University College & Seminary in Toronto. Dr. Davey's research includes publications in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education, Canadian Music Educator, American Arts Quarterly, The British Journal of Music Education,* and *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education.* Professor Davey served as Vice-President Academic at Canadian Mennonite University from 2008–2014 and is recently retired.

*Irma Fast Dueck* is Associate Professor of Practical Theology at Canadian Mennonite University. She has been a pastor and university chaplain before beginning her career at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (a predecessor college of CMU) in 1991. Irma's teaching and research interests frequently lead her to themes connected to the practices of the church and the theology purveyed/conveyed by those practices. In the past few years she has given more sustained focus on the rituals of the church such as worship and baptism. Irma worships with the saints at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

*Jonathan Dyck* is a graduate of Canadian Mennonite University. He subsequently wrote his master's thesis on early modern reading practices and political theology in the poetry of John Milton. He currently works as the graphic designer for MCC Canada.

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*Marilyn Peters Kliewer* is Dean of Student Life at CMU. This department includes Chapel and Spiritual Life, Student Advising, Commuter Student and International Student programming, Accessibility Services, Residence Life, Athletics, Counselling and Wellness, Financial Services, and Career Resourcing. Marilyn has a passion for creating a learning environment that will help students succeed. She finds it rewarding to see students learn, gain a lifelong network of friends, develop their leadership skills, and thrive.

*Gordon H. Matties* is Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Canadian Mennonite University. He began teaching in 1984 at one of CMU's founding colleges (MBBC/Concord College) after studies at Briercrest College, UBC, Regent College and Vanderbilt University (PhD). He wrote the Joshua commentary in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series (Herald Press, 2012). He has also written on Ezekiel for the *New Interpreter's Study Bible* and 1 & 2 Kings for the *Common English Bible Study Bible*.

*Tim Rogalsky* is Associate Professor of Mathematics at Canadian Mennonite University. Tim's love for theology was sparked in the early 1990s as a student at MBBC, and has been nurtured during his time at CMU. The result is a rather unique interest in the connections between mathematics and religion. A summary of this vo-

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*Robert J. Suderman* has been engaged in educational issues in Mennonite Church Canada and beyond. He has taught in seminaries in Latin America (Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba), and served in executive staff positions for MC Canada, including as General Secretary. His education spans degrees in Arts, Education, Peace, and a Dr. of Theol., specializing in New Testament. In his retirement, he has served as Secretary of the Peace Commission of Mennonite World Conference, and in itinerant teaching and leadership training on all continents.

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*Ray Vander Zaag* is Associate Professor of International Development Studies at Canadian Mennonite University, where he has taught since 2000. His research looks at the roles of faith-based NGOs and religion in community development. His teaching and research is shaped by his NGO work experience in Haiti, where he served with CRWRC/World Renew from 1985 to 1993, and where he continues to travel for research and project evaluation work. He also worked with CIDA for one year as a project officer before joining CMU.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MENNONITE UNIVERSITY?

This book answers that question in a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive way, drawing on the thought and experience of the faculty, staff, and alumni of Canadian Mennonite University, as well as the leaders of the churches that formed it and a neighbouring provincial university. While the book comes out of the life of CMU, it is meant to be a resource for anyone interested in questions of religion and university, from the broadest to the most particular of concerns.

This book is written in honour of Gerald Gerbrandt, who was President of CMU from 2003-2012, and who for years previous to that took part in leading the formation of the university.

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