

6-2005

## The Cresset (Vol. LXVIII, No. 5, Trinity)

Valparaiso University

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# THE CRESSET

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE, THE ARTS, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS



*Special Issue: Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts*

Trinity | 2005

# THE CRESSET

Alan F. Harre, *Publisher*  
Thomas D. Kennedy, *Editor*  
June 2005, Trinity  
Vol. LXVIII, No.5 ISSN 0011-1198

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Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

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# in luce tua

You can't stand up all by yourself, you can't stand up alone...

Dear Ian,

Two things I'm sure I've thought a lot about are you and church-related higher education (though the former has kept me awake late at night much more than the latter). I'm glad to have this opportunity to think about these two together, now, as you begin seriously to explore your college options.

The last couple of years we've noticed how few of your friends from school and from church youth group head off to church-related colleges, and of those who do, how few of them go to a church-related university because it's church-related rather than, say, because it's a school with Division III swimming, or it's a university with a really good graphics arts program, or, duh, it's Notre Dame.

And we've heard your initial view of church-related colleges—You think it is important to be exposed in college to the sorts of people and the sorts of things you are going to be exposed to after college; you think you've been in a protected nest all your life, and now you need to move out and deal with life without the protections. Church-related colleges, as you understand them, are really about protecting young adults from the real world, and that doesn't sit well with you.

I tend to think about these things a bit differently, and I want to try to explain that here. But first of all, as an oversimplification of things, let me say a little about higher education. There are basically three types of colleges and universities: (1) the publics—large or small state universities, (under)funded by public taxes—think Indiana University, the College of William and Mary, and Ball State University; (2) the secular privates, most of which were originally founded as church-related colleges—think Princeton, Yale, Oberlin, and Carleton; and (3) the spectrum of church-related and Christian colleges and universities, some you might attend for four years and never know you weren't at a secular private, others of which will have you in the chapel for hours on your first day on campus.

As you know, I have degrees from a widely recognized category 3 and a fairly prestigious 1, and I've taught at several 3's as well as a third-tier 1. The first thing you should know is that you can get a decent education—what I would consider a decent education, not what the schools themselves might think counts as one—at colleges of each of these types of schools. Each of these types of schools has smart students and smart professors. Each of these types of schools has faculty who care deeply about their academic discipline and their students. And none of these types of schools has a corner on good values (“Values” rhetoric is big

at all institutions these days, and your skepticism about a school should be proportionate to how frequently “values” are mentioned during your campus visit.). Furthermore, religion will often be more prevalent and religious talk more tolerated at a public than at a private, even some church-related privates. My experience has been that church-related faculty are at least as ready to find students parochial and in need of re-formation as are public university faculty (and a bit more ready to think that this, in fact, is their special vocation). Often, the differences between colleges and universities of types 1, 2, and 3 are more a matter of size and location than the type of schools they are. Still, I think you (as well as many of your peers from church youth group) really do belong at a church-related college. Let me try to explain why with several brief theses:

1. *God and God's creation long for the activity of free beings who order their freedom by goodness. Genuine freedom is not random choice, but is willed activity normed by the Good (which we know as God) and the well-being of others. A church-related college should be more likely to recognize you as a member of a community journeying towards the Good and hold you accountable for a wider range of actions.* Part of the appeal of going away to college is that you have an opportunity to start anew, to define yourself as whoever you would like to be. Taking charge of your identity is a good thing (though you'll never have as much control over who you are as you'd like), but you and I believe that there are wrong choices and that it is all too easy for folks like us to make the wrong choices. At a church-related college you are more likely to find yourself surrounded by those who understand the Good more or less as you do and who will frown upon behaviors incompatible with your journey towards goodness while they expect you to advance on your journey. These others will mostly be students, I think, but some faculty, too, and some residential life personnel as well as the university's chaplain.

Of course some colleges have too many rules. Of course some universities have rules about silly things. But you and I agree on the importance of being a well-integrated self, of having your act together. That integration and the real freedom that accompanies it is achieved in a comprehensive, rather than a selective, obedience to the Good. “Goodness don't allow no picking and choosin'.” In other words, you will better become the person you want to be if you are surrounded by folks who agree with you on what sort of person it is important to be and who, like you, are trying to discipline themselves to become good not merely in one or two admittedly important aspects of life

but in life as a whole, people who will help you as you struggle not to care too much about money and to care enough about the poor and needy, people who honor but do not idolize the human body, people who, like you, are trying to love God better, and to love their neighbors as themselves, and to love God's creation. College is a place for you to explore freedom, real freedom, a freedom that is realized only with the help of others.

2. *A grasp of truths about God and God's created order is an essential part of love for God and all that he has created. A task for educated Christians is to learn to love God better by seeing all things in God and learn to love our neighbors better by understanding the neighbor as an imago dei, and learn to love God's creation better by understanding its riches as having been created by God.* A college education ought to provide you with the requisite skills for flourishing after college, to be sure, but the goal of education is a love-formed knowledge (or, perhaps it is a knowledge-shaped love). Knowledge is a good thing, but Christians believe knowledge is good because, in some way, everything that can be known is about the God we know as love. In many cases and at many levels the connection between God and what we know is not very interesting—what does the truth that all triangles have three sides have to do with God? Why are there flies?—So in some disciplines much of the love of God will consist of simply excelling in the discipline; love of God not only motivates the scholarly activity, the scholarly activity is a way of loving God even though no reference is made to him. Still, if the discipline achieves knowledge (or even warranted belief) the object of that knowledge or belief is somehow related to the Creator and Redeemer of the universe and achieving that knowledge can be a part of one's love for God.

Some colleges do a better job of teaching one to love God, one's neighbors, and the creation than to know and love God and all things in God. Other colleges are better at discovering truths about the creation and creation's God than in fostering the love of God and all things in God. But church-related colleges and universities should do better than their secular counterparts, private and public, in recognizing that the goal of learning is, ultimately, God and God's creation, and in their insistence that every effort be made to tie things together, not to let stand divided what God has created united.

3. *God, our neighbors, and even the creation itself long for beauty and the excellent production of human hearts and hands. A distinctive calling of the church-related college and university is to be a place that knows and teaches the value of beauty and excellence and encourages all members of the community to value beauty and excellence appropriately.* Human beings are makers and doers and all that we make and do can be done poorly or well, shabbily or excellently. We and our neighbors and God's creation are better off when we learn to pursue beauty rather than mere utility.

But our culture tends to prefer utility to beauty and excellence, tends to encourage opulence for a few or efficiency for the privileged rather than a beauty that serves our neighbor and honors God. A church-related college or university ought to be a place where one learns to love beauty and excellence.

In a nutshell, Ian, I've suggested that you are called to know and love and live in imitation of God, who is Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. You will flourish, you will be who you are meant to be, as you grow in the knowledge and love of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. And, secondly, I've claimed that the knowledge and love of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty is hard to achieve. There are so many things pulling us in other directions, teasing us into a longing for things that do not last. And those pullings will only increase with the freedom in your college years.

You are one of the world's lucky few who can spend four years of your life on the quest to better know and more fittingly love Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. That quest is more likely to go well for you and, hence, for the world, if you are part of a company on that quest, part of a community of those who, like you, want to be who they really are, who want to know and love well and rightly, who long for beauty and excellence. No church-related college will aid and accompany you on this journey as well as it might but, even so, you will be better for the journey with them, even as I am better for our journey together.

Love,  
Dad

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A journey of sorts of my own comes now to an end. After three years of editorship, it is time for me to return to the philosophy classroom. I have deeply enjoyed the good thing that we have done with *The Cresset* and I thank you, the reader, for your support these years. *The Cresset* has never been a one person operation and that remains so to this day. I remain deeply grateful to my friend, Gail, who believed I could do this work, to the publisher who entrusted me with this charge, and for the many writers, especially our regular columnists, who have made this work so much fun and so rewarding. A special word of appreciation goes to my friend A.P. who has written in each of my issues save one. Three others deserve mention for their dedicated service: John Ruff, whose only vice as poetry editor has been his unwillingness to include more of his own poetry in these pages, Jenna Hammang, who has really done all the work while I had all the fun for the past three years, and Josh Messner whose loyalty to *The Cresset* is that loyalty than which none greater can be conceived, and whose continuing friendship and encouragement have made light many a heavy load. I will be succeeded by James Old, to whom I extend best wishes on his new calling. ☛

TDK

# writing as an act of faith

**A**LTHOUGH I SPEND A LOT OF MY TIME WRITING, I AM NOT a writer. Not a real writer. Real writers write novels and short stories, poems and plays, even children's stories. During my freshman year in college I learned that I was not a writer and was not likely to become one. I had a little success in the Creative Writing class I took. The prose essay I wrote won an Honorable Mention prize in the *Atlantic Monthly* contest; but reading my short story to the class was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life. It was bad on paper. Worse—much worse—aloud. Nobody had to tell me. Like Orual reading her complaint before the gods, I was condemned by my own reading.

So I write about writing, not as a writer, but as a philosopher. My thesis is that Jean-Luc Marion, whose philosophical work I greatly admire, was wrong—dead wrong—when he wrote in *God Without Being*:

*One must admit that theology, of all writing, certainly causes the greatest pleasure. Precisely not the pleasure of the text, but the pleasure—unless it have to do with a joy—of transgressing it; from words to the Word, from the Word to words, incessantly and in theology alone, since there alone the Word finds in the word nothing less than a body. The body of the text does not belong to the text, but to the One who is embodied in it.*

I have italicized my quibble with Marion. I do not contest his account of theology, only his claim that it has a monopoly on this joyous pleasure. The writer, too, can experience the joy of moving between the Word and the words. In a different way, of course.

Let us find our way to understanding the relation between theology and writing indirectly, by talking about philosophy. All philosophy, I often find myself saying, is faith seeking understanding. The formula, *fides quaerens intellectum*, is Anselm's, and it most immediately describes not only his own work but also that of Augustine before him and Aquinas after him, philosopher-theologians whose faith was the Christian faith. What can it mean to say that it applies as well to Plato and Aristotle, Hume and Nietzsche, Habermas and Derrida? To say that all philosophical writing, which I have already distinguished from *real* writing, is an act of faith?

It means that every philosopher, whether realizing it or not, has taken the hermeneutical turn. This, in turn, means

## Merold Westphal

first that philosophical writing is interpretation rather than intuition. Instead of being the coded expression of the immediate and total presence of the subject matter to the philosopher's mind (awaiting decoding by the reader who will vicariously duplicate that duplicate), it reflects a construal, a seeing-as, an interpretation of the subject matter that is underdetermined by the latter. The subject matter leaves itself open to other descriptions, just as the score of a sonata or the script of a play leaves room for a variety of *excellent* performances and a text leaves itself open to a variety of *excellent* translations.

In the second place, the hermeneutical turn signifies that these construals are not the product of the unmediated encounter between the writer and the subject matter. The philosopher brings to the encounter with the real, like the shell on a turtle's back, what Kant called the *a priori* and what has since been called perspectives, presuppositions, pre-understandings, conceptual schemes, control beliefs, vocabularies, language games, and so forth. The thinker does not see the world *sub specie aeternitatis* (through God's eyes, as it were), does not occupy what has nicely been called the "view from nowhere," but is rather embedded in a metaphysically contingent and historically particular linguistic-cultural situation that (pre)shapes each construal. As Gadamer puts it, we are always prejudiced in the sense that judgment is shaped by pre-judgment.

**S**INCE AT LEAST THE TIME OF PLATO, PHILOSOPHERS HAVE sought to escape the hermeneutical cave, deriding it as mere opinion (*doxa*) or belief (*pistis*) while claiming that philosophy can give us genuine knowledge. Perhaps the broadest agreement of philosophy since Hegel is that this escape is not possible, that the hermeneutical turn is a *fait accompli* even for those philosophers who desperately wish it were not so and live in tragi-comic denial. Plato, Spinoza, and Hegel, for example, are great philosophers because of the power of the vision they articulate, not by virtue of the way their arguments convert it into presuppositionless *knowledge*.

But in the present context there are two problems with the terminology of opinion and knowledge for expressing one or another type of situation epistemology. Today philosophers are so deeply divided as to what deserves the name of *knowledge* that to contrast faith with knowledge has no clear, agreed meaning. In fact, on some accounts (for

example that of Alvin Plantinga, following John Calvin, in his *Warranted Christian Belief*) faith is a mode of knowledge. On the other hand, while *pistis* is also the New Testament word for *faith*, Plato's use, which assimilates it to mere opinion, 1) treats it as mere belief without the existential commitments of biblical faith and 2) correspondingly fails to distinguish those beliefs which are peripheral and only loosely related to one's deepest presuppositions from those which reflect one's deepest identity.

So, when I say that all philosophy is faith seeking understanding, I shall use biblical rather than Platonic language. The faith which is the perspective or presupposition from which each philosopher speaks is not this opinion or that belief, but an analogue of biblical faith, a language game that is a form of life and that serves at once as the cognitive and existential a priori guiding that thinker's interpretations of the real. It is simultaneously a *Weltanschauung* and a fundamental project. Then, instead of saying that this faith is not (yet) knowledge, I will say that even when the faith in question is not Christian faith (or any other religious faith, for that matter), the philosopher, like the believer, walks by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). Not that faith is simply blind, but that its sight is not pure insight; it is rather a seeing "through a glass, darkly," "in a mirror, dimly," "in an enigma" (1 Cor 13:12). This seeing-as is constrained by finitude and contaminated by fallenness; it does not have the finality and objectivity usually associated with knowledge. The philosopher does not "just see" that this is how the real must be construed; or perhaps, like the racist who "just sees" that certain individuals are morally and intellectually inferior to "our kind," the thinker "just sees" that this is how the real must be construed precisely because of the contingent and particular language game in which this construal is embedded and from which it emerges.

That this faith, both as (pre)cognition and as commitment seeks understanding in philosophical reflection means both that it seeks to grasp more fully what the theoretical and practical implications of the interpretations to which it gives rise might be, and to subject them to critical evaluation in conversation with different, even contrary interpreters and interpretations. Needless to say, when the faith that seeks understanding in reflection is Christian faith, as is the case with Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and many others, the conversation will include other Christian interpreters, other religious interpreters, and pagan or secular interpreters. Given the relation of the big A's to Plato and/or Aristotle, it should be clear that the Christian thinker can be at once deeply indebted to and sharply critical of secular conversation partners.

**N**OW I CAN STATE MY THESIS: WRITERS ARE ENGAGED IN the process of faith seeking understanding just as much as philosophers, so writing is an act of faith. The genres are different, to be sure, but 1) writers are

engaged in interpreting the real, sharing their seeings-as with us in poetry and in prose; 2) their interpretations do not come from nowhere but are shaped by the language games in which they are situated, which represent faith rather than pure (in)sight, presuppositions that are penultimate in their revisability and replaceability; and 3) the faith they explore can be the Christian species of the genus defined by the first two characteristics just given.

Let us suppose that it is. What would writing as an act of Christian faith look like? It would not necessarily focus on a religious subject matter or invoke religious vocabulary. But its seeings-as would be through the eyes of faith. I once heard C. S. Lewis described as the most completely converted man the speaker had ever met. Whereas philosophers and theologians are apt to talk, appropriately enough, of the conversion of the intellect and the will, for the writer the conversion of the imagination will be just as important. Images and narratives will reflect an underlying biblical vision of the world in terms of creation, fall, and redemption by grace though (to repeat) not necessarily in that language. While this may be conscious and deliberate, it need not be. Just to the degree that the imagination is converted in and through the spirituality of the writer, it may well occur spontaneously and unreflectively. This is why I want to deny Marion's claim that the theologian has a monopoly on dwelling between the Word and the words. The philosopher and the writer can do so as well.

\* \* \*

So far I have talked about the hermeneutical turn, something taken for granted by the philosophers who are called postmodern. Let me turn to three more narrowly postmodern themes. In doing so I hope to show how what Marion says about theology can be said of writing as well:

It diverts the author from himself . . . it causes him to write outside of himself, even against himself, since he must write not of what he is, on what he knows, in view of what he wants, but in, for, and by what he receives and in no case masters.

First, there is Lyotard's famous definition of the postmodern condition as "incredulity toward metanarratives." It is often assumed that since the biblical narrative that stretches from Eden to the New Jerusalem is a meganarrative it is also a metanarrative. But Lyotard has in mind the big stories told to modernity by the philosophers it adopts and adores, and these differ decisively from the biblical meganarrative in important respects, the first of which has just been mentioned. Modernity's metanarratives are stories told by philosophers, purporting to be objective, rational, even scientific knowledge of nature, society, history, and even God. The key examples are Hegel and Marx. By contrast, the biblical story is told by

prophets and apostles who appeal not to their own insight, but to the word, and, eventually, the Word of God. Kierkegaard's distinction between the genius and the apostle is important here.

Just for this reason there is a second crucial difference. The function of modernity's metanarratives, as Lyotard presents them, is to legitimize both the knowledge, scientific and speculative, and the social practice, bourgeois or revolutionary, of modernity. The biblical story is more nearly a delegitimation narrative. It tells us that we are neither God nor the kingdom of God. It is a story of life east of Eden: of covenants broken, of power and piety in the service of injustice, of disciples more interested in privilege than in faithfulness, of churches you wouldn't really want to belong to, and so forth. It is at the same time a story of divine judgment, mercy, and love-of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God, but in such a way as always to remind "us" that however much "we" may be called to life in the kingdom, "we" (meaning our culture, our society, our nation, our church) never are the kingdom. The eschaton is not the democratic, capitalist, technological, consumerist society we already are; nor is it the cure to all this that radical activists would erect if only they were given power. This is why biblical faith can never be at peace with modernity, but must mistrust its megalomaniacal metanarratives as much or more than secular postmodernism does.

SEE NO REASON WHY THIS INCREDULITY SHOULD NOT SHAPE the writer as well as the philosopher, in which case the Christian writer would resemble Marion's theologian in writing "against himself, since he must write not of what he is, on what he knows, in view of what he wants, but in, for, and by that which he receives." This would be to work between the Word and the words. By portraying the beauty that catches us unaware and the ugliness from which we prefer to turn away (perhaps by projecting it onto "them"), the writer's words become icons that point beyond themselves to the beauty of original creation, the ugliness of what we have done to it, and, once again, the beauty of promised redemption. So to write is *imitatio Christi*, for the Word performs the same three tasks for those who listen to Him.

Another important postmodern theme is Heidegger's critique of onto-theology. He interprets a philosophical tradition that stretches from pre-Socratic Greece to Nietzsche as seeking to render the whole of being transparent to human understanding and with allowing "God" into its discourse only insofar as the Highest Being (which takes many forms, including Nietzsche's will to power) contributes to this goal. God is reduced to being a means to our ends, in this case the aspiration to absolute knowledge. A tragic consequence is the loss of a sense of awe and wonder before the mystery of being, a loss that reaches its culmination in modern technology in which everything, including ourselves, becomes raw materials at the disposal

of our will to power. In suggesting that Christian theology has caught the onto-theological virus from the philosophers, Heidegger overlooks the overwhelming consensus among those theologians that God is incomprehensible, the *mysterium tremendum*, the ultimate mystery. The theologian knows about the mystery of God, the mystery of creation, and the mystery of evil. When this faith seeks understanding it does not demand total transparency but seeks to understand Infinite Love, creaturely goodness, and creaturely evil precisely as that which exceeds our grasp, our language, our concepts.

I see no reason why the Christian writer should not evoke a sense of awe and wonder before the mystery of being just as powerfully as the philosopher and Marion's theologian. In fact, Heidegger himself turns to the poet in seeking to counteract modernity as the culmination of the onto-theological history of the west. Perhaps, just by virtue of the primacy of image and narrative over concept and system, the writer is less likely than the philosopher and theologian to forget "to write outside of himself" about "that which he . . . in no case masters." Because the Christian writer, like the Christian theologian, writes out of a biblically formed faith, we should expect to find an antidote to the know-it-all hubris of the West. (Perhaps this is why literature is such a valuable resource for the preacher who reads novels along with Nehemiah and poems along with Paul.)

Finally, there is the death of the author thesis as developed by Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida. They insist that the issue is theological, though it is not about God or the death of God (which is presupposed). It is rather about the author who is thought to resemble God too closely. The author whose death is proclaimed is the author who creates the text just as God has been said to create the world. The text has in it all and only the meanings that the author intends to put in it, and if there is any indeterminacy (the analogue of creaturely freedom), it, too, is there by authorial intent. Thus the sovereign author unilaterally determines the meaning of the text.

WITHOUT DENYING THAT THE AUTHOR PLAYS AN important role in the creation of meaning, the death of the author hypothesis portrays the author in terms of creaturely finitude. This means that the text is open at both ends and not under the omnipotent control of the author, who is neither the alpha nor the omega of the text. At the front end, since the author is the bearer of traditions and has been shaped by texts and practices in ways that are not fully conscious, the "new" text is not a creation *ex nihilo*. It is the product of many voices speaking over, under, around, and through the author's voice. For the Christian writer, of course, many of these voices will be biblical voices. And they will be welcome. The "anxiety of authorship" that accompanies the wish of genius to be divine, and thus an absolute beginning, is the

literary version of philosophical modernity's desire for the ego, whether individually conceived as in Descartes and Locke, or socially conceived as in Rousseau and Hegel, to be the ultimate measure of both meaning and being.

Nor does the author have a monopoly of meaning at the other end. Readers who come after the text will find more meanings about heaven and earth than are dreamed of in the author's intent. The text may be the author's property as a commodity in a capitalist society; but at the semantic level, as the attempt to portray life as distinct from earning a living, the text is more nearly a feast to which the author invites all comers, the paradox of a gift that never was private property.

Once again Marion's description of theology would seem to apply to writing as well. "It diverts the author from himself . . . it causes him to write outside of himself, since he

must write . . . in, for, and by that which he receives and in no case masters." In relation to onto-theology, this "in no case masters" pointed us to the mystery of being. In relation to the death of the (supposedly divine) author, it points us to the reader as partner in the creation of meaning, along with the author, who properly says, "I have received from others what I also handed on to you."

This reference to the reader begs us to consider what it might mean to speak of reading as an act of faith. But that is a topic for another time. For the present there is enough for us to ponder in the thought that the writer can resemble the theologian by moving between the Word and the words. ✚

Merold Westphal, *Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University, presented this essay at the Calvin College Festival of Faith and Writing, April 2004.*

## Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts 15th Annual National Conference

# **"What Does It Mean To Be Faithful to a Tradition?"**

September 30–October 2, 2005

College of the Holy Cross  
Worcester, Massachusetts

# same, same! pleasures and purposes of metaphor

Julia Kasdorf

*English 213: Introduction to Poetry Writing*

Metaphor is made of two parts, I tell them  
because I must say something: vehicle and tenor,

and we should know the names of things we do by instinct,  
though I only half believe this. Not that kind of vehicle,

not that kind of tenor, and yet their poems must move,  
must sing. It's confusing and hard. Aristotle said

genius sees resemblance in difference. A car is not  
a metaphor, is a machine made of countless metal parts

that keep us mindful of oil, coolant, a milk jug in the trunk  
in which to dilute it, mindful of all the ways a day can turn,

pulling into Bloomsburg State, for instance, steam blowing  
from under the hood, I asked a student for the lecture hall,

campus clock gonging the hour of my talk, but he said,  
"Look, something really bad is happening to your car."

I have watched water run off my radiator  
as freely as the waters of birth. I have peered

into the boxy chambers of my master cylinder, drained  
of break fluid, dark and divided as the human heart.

Unable to start some mornings, I have loosened a wing nut,  
lifted the air filter, and jabbed a pencil stub

into my butterfly valve, clenched like a catch in the throat.  
So when half the audience walked out of that reading

to attend a memorial service for some boys, killed  
in a frat house fire, I did what any of us would do:

paused until the room grew still, then continued.  
In towns like that, mechanics take only cash,

but the folks who remained bought enough books  
to cover the cost of radiator hose, plus labor,

that transaction as sweet and pure as the motion  
of any of our lubricious, invisible parts.

**R**OBERT FROST'S TERSE DEFINITION OF METAPHOR WAS:  
"saying one thing in terms of another." I. A. Richards called the two parts of a metaphor,  
"tenor" and "vehicle": the tenor is the idea being  
expressed, or the subject of the comparison, and the vehicle

is the image by which the idea is conveyed. So when Robert Burns wrote, "O my love is like a red, red rose," love is the tenor and rose is the vehicle. For the purposes of this piece, I gather under "metaphor" all types of figurative speech, such as image, trope, conceit, simile, metonymy, and so forth. By way of introduction and demonstration, I began with a poem of mine published several years ago in *The Common Review*.

Essentially this poem begins as a spoof of our work as teachers and thinkers. It claims the car is not a metaphor, yet belies that claim by drawing on the everyday American trope that compares cars to human bodies, often women's bodies, in order to generate an excessive run of machine/body metaphors. So, when the car breaks down, death can't be far away. But before the end of the poem, resurrection occurs through automotive repairs which are financed by the audience's purchase of books—salvation by means of consumer consumption. Or maybe grace incarnated through the economics of a temporary community created by the shared experience of language, that give-and-take of meaning as pleasurable as the huge maroon '78 Impala cruising along before it blew its hose. Overt and implicit metaphors drive the poem. Out of the play of metaphors, meaning—and maybe even a kind of healing or redemption—emerge.

**T**HESE REFLECTIONS ON METAPHOR FALL INTO THREE parts: epistemology, pedagogy, and pleasure (a big topic divided into even bigger parts). I draw on evidence from different spheres of my experience as poet, professor, and mother of a small child, despite the fact that I haven't been entirely successful at integrating the distinct identities and kinds of work that produce art, flourish in academia, and nurture children. Most of the messages I've gotten are that, speaking on a purely practical level, these are probably mutually exclusive enterprises. At the Christian college where I used to teach—and I suspect this is the rule rather than the exception—family was supported, of course, but the teaching and service loads were so heavy, I wasn't sure I'd ever be able to keep my job and make art, let alone be a mother. I left that position for a research university, where the teaching load is much lighter and the money better, but where the dominant culture suggests that teaching is merely a distraction from the real work, research, which is what they call poetry, and as for

motherhood—well, if you have to do it, that is your own mistake to manage. In recent years, the AAUP and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* have published studies that reveal the dire situation for mothers in academia, as measured by dramatically lower tenure and promotion rates. The corporate university still has a long way to go to catch up with corporate America when it comes to enabling parents to succeed as workers.

Writing, teaching, and mothering can be (and maybe should be) full-time occupations; still, I'm a poet, a maker of metaphors, so I naturally resist exclusions and the will to contain things in neat categories. (And, at least now, it seems that I don't have a whole lot of choice in the matter.) Add to this the fact that I hate to do anything in a manner that, where I come from, we call "half-assed," which is a metaphor that means "partially." These are the particular pressures under which these notes were composed; it's a challenge that feels even more complicated than "integrating faith and learning," a phrase that, by the way, has always seemed kind of blasphemous to me, for I believe in a sacramental universe, that "all knowledge is God's knowledge," and that reason, belief, and thought are embodied. As a cradle Anabaptist, I know that faith and work are one; as a converted Episcopalian, I know that word and flesh are one. And I think that fretting and arguing about how faith and learning should connect seems to suggest some sort of prior, violent split between the two that I simply cannot admit.

### epistemology

On a bitter cold morning last November, a month before her second birthday, Amelia, my child who yanks off hats, kicks off covers, and screams at the sight of the sunscreen bottle, stood in the foyer, defiant. It was frigid outside, and she had to wear something on her hands. Braced for wails of refusal, I thrust a pair of thumbless, purple fleece mittens onto the ends of her arms. Stunned silence. She looked at the mitts for a long time, silently turning palms up, then down, then up again. Then, she finally looked up at me with a broad grin, and raising her hands to either side of her face, she pronounced with satisfaction, "Paws!"

In his aphorisms collected in "Adagia," Wallace Stevens writes, "All of our ideas come from the natural world: trees = umbrellas."

Ezra Pound said, "...the natural object is always the adequate symbol."

God commanded Adam to name the animals.

At the root of language is metaphor, the desire and human privilege to find names for the unknown. Metaphor is a means by which we apprehend the unfamiliar by calling it by a familiar term, one that may refer to the natural world. We say "the spine of a book," "the eye of a needle,"

"the foot of a mountain," to remind you of a few dead metaphors, figures that are so worn they no longer register as figures at all. Amelia knew that paws only belong to animals, but confronted with the fuzzy, blunt, purple objects, she needed a way to domesticate the strange. Hands inside mittens do look a little like paws, and lacking the new word, she found an old one. In this way, necessity transforms all toddlers and adult learners of foreign languages into poets.

And the act doesn't really look that different for writers. The animals we struggle to name are inexplicable emotions or confounding experiences. Most times, the quickest way from experience to articulate feeling detours through metaphor. Metaphor means "transference," or "to carry over." I have been told that you can see the word "Metaphoros" painted across moving vans in Greece. In psychological terms, the qualities of one thing get transferred onto another; metaphor enables us to identify the tenor with the vehicle—often because the tenor is too difficult for our minds to grasp in its own terms—too unfamiliar or confounding or frightening. That difficulty is demonstrated by Yusef Komunyakaa, one of our contemporary poets who served in Viet Nam as a writer and editor for an Army newspaper, in a poem from *Dien Cai Dau* (1988). The entire poem enacts the mind's desperate attempt to figure the facts of a horrible memory into other terms:

"You and I are Disappearing" —Bjorn Hakasson

The cry I bring down from the hills  
belongs to a girl still burning  
inside my head. At daybreak  
she burns like a piece of paper.  
She burns like foxfire  
in a thigh-shaped valley.  
A skirt of flames  
dances around her  
at dusk.  
We stand with our hands  
hanging at our sides,  
while she burns  
like a sack of dry ice.  
She burns like oil on water.  
She burns like a cattail torch  
dipped in gasoline.  
She glows like the fat tip  
of a banker's cigar,  
silent as quicksilver.  
A tiger under a rainbow  
at nightfall.  
She burns like a shot glass of vodka.  
She burns like a field of poppies  
at the edge of a rain forest.

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*Metaphor  
makes the  
familiar  
strange on  
purpose,  
for fun.*

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She rises like dragonsmoke  
to my nostrils.  
She burns like a burning bush  
driven by a godawful wind.

THE UNSPEAKABLE FINDS UTTERANCE THROUGH metaphor, but the temporary name is necessarily a lie. One review of my first book, *Sleeping Preacher*, noted with dismay a surprising absence of any real metaphors, which typically are essential elements of poetry, the plain-spoken quality of my narratives from family and community history, only sparked by irony and some occasional metonymy. I realized that this was true, and wondered whether I unconsciously avoided metaphors because I had internalized a taboo against those lies of transference. In my culture of origin, falsehoods and excessive uses of language, such as oaths, are strictly forbidden. Moreover, Anabaptists have a history of extreme iconoclasm, values that are not entirely unique among Protestant traditions as they have evolved in the New World. And I wonder whether language itself—because of its slippery, representational quality—might be the problem.

Here is a poem that expresses anxiety about the gap between words and things. Some time ago, I was reading an article that discussed the materiality of language, a way of thinking about language that does not split material from immaterial, experience from representation. It's one of those ideas I immediately liked in theory, but wasn't sure I believed in fact, until I considered it in terms of language acquisition, the way very young children who are just being initiated into linguistic conventions, chant the names of things as if to conjure up the object by magic. At the time I was teaching in Oregon, watching Amelia learn the names for things as I tried to figure out how to be a parent.

#### *The Materiality of Language at Lincoln*

*Truck, truck* she slurs then lunges  
toward a logger rumbling under a load  
of skinned trunks. At seventeen months,  
her words do not express any thing

but are things, as hard as the stones  
she hides in her fists or the sticks  
she yanks from the wood box.  
Who can say what charms her most,

a long stick or my sudden, *No!*  
*No sticks! You'll poke your eye!*  
as predictable as the blue gills which  
circle and lift while she chants *fish*

*fish, fish* over the mill pond.  
She is one-fourth, and I, one-half

my dad who said, *Stop talking.*  
*Let's sleep on it and speak again,*

as if anger would turn our words  
into swords that could never be bent  
into spades or thrust into fence posts.  
Better to bite our own tongues

than wound another. At twenty-one,  
I found that wrong—still do—  
but such lessons come later on.  
Now I need only to feed her hunger

for significant sounds, this one  
who sings *tractor, tractor* each time  
her finger finds a nut on the hub cap,  
*juice, juice, juice* to the grinning cup.

"Better to bite our own tongues than wound another," sums up fairly well the ethic of articulation from my background. Language, as the medium of religion (swords and ploughshares), culture (sticks and stones), and charms, is a game of high stakes, with silence sometimes the wisest response, and what a wonderful confusion for a young person with literary inclinations to inherit.

#### pedagogy

After I had accepted my first job as a college professor, I read the syllabus from my predecessor for a course I would soon be teaching myself, and it spooked me. As a rationale for enrolling in the course called "Introduction to Poetry," he argued that college students should learn to read poetry so that they can better understand the words of Jesus. I found this troubling, coming from an Anabaptist tradition of the Amish-Mennonite sort, which somewhere along the line must have been influenced by the great motto attributed to St. Francis: "Preach the Gospel at all times; use words if necessary." Where I come from, it's usually not necessary to use words to express matters of faith; whatever you do in the world is witness enough. And things which are not necessary—and not practical or true in a literal sense—are to be avoided. So, I left Jesus off the syllabus when I taught "Introduction to Poetry" at Messiah College. However, I've since come to see my predecessor's point, and I appreciate his attempt to seduce to poetry even the fundamentalist students.

Metaphor must be the primary pedagogical method of the Hebrew and Christian literary tradition, after all. I'm no biblical scholar, but it seems that whenever God wants people to hear something they are unwilling or unable to grasp, God speaks through the most unreliable media: dreams, which get interpreted metaphorically, or prophets who tell strange stories that function as analogues of experience. Think of King David, "in the spring, at the time when kings go off to war," who stayed back in Jerusalem

and there spied the beautiful Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, bathing on a roof top. He sent for her, slept with her, and she conceived a child. After an unsuccessful attempt to get Uriah to surrender his soldier's sense of stoic duty and sleep with his wife, David had the Hittite placed on the front lines so he might be killed in battle. When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. But after the time of mourning, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. According to the text, "The thing David had done displeased the Lord." And so the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan told the story of two men—one rich, one poor. The rich man had many sheep, but the poor man had only one ewe which he loved and cared for as if it were his daughter. When the rich man needed to kill an animal for a feast, he took the poor man's only ewe. When David heard this story, he "burned with anger" and sought to punish the rich man. Then Nathan said, "You are that man!" (2 Sam 11–12:7)

Jesus continued in the prophetic tradition, teaching through analogue—whether they were pointed stories designed to rebuke an individual or outrageous metaphors to illuminate the nature of the kingdom of heaven. Only a few of those metaphors become flustering contradictions: the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed; no, it's like a pearl of great price; it's ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom; no, it's a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire two men, and so on. Like dreams, which can be bewildering or terrifying or utterly absurd, the prophet's tropes penetrate a mind's defenses and break meaning onto the consciousness, sometimes suddenly shattering, "That man is you!" or sometimes gently making the familiar strange enough to see. It's as if metaphor reminds us of something we had forgotten.

Metaphoric language enables us to see our experience anew, but with an excess of knowing. In 1913, Ezra Pound described the phenomenology of reading the new "image"—a kind of speeded up metaphor that was entirely immediate:

An "Image" is what presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time...[he was borrowing the word "complex" from the new realm of psychological study]. It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art."

Pound's famous example of the Imagist poem, also written in 1913, is "In a Station of the Metro." He had struggled for

months, drafting lengthy versions of a poem that might capture the flash of feeling when he saw a crowd of people emerging from a subway stop in Paris—those gorgeous faces before him in a moment of recognition that was both immediate and absolutely ephemeral. After many drafts, he abandoned any attempt to convey the transcendent moment and settled, instead, on an attempt to create the experience within his reader:

In a Station of the Metro  
The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Pound's terms—liberation . . . freedom . . . a sense of sudden growth—are ways of describing the instant of surprise and recognition that comes by means of metaphor. As Wallace Stevens put it, "Metaphor creates a new reality from which the original appears to be unreal." But in this sense of new creation, there is also a sense that metaphor must use materials from the known world. The flash comes not so much from seeing a novel thing for the first time, but the connection between here and there, that sudden surprise of something remote being immediate, intimate, and true.

Those moments of insight or excess-sight are the ones we retain over time. When I recall my college and graduate school education, I believe that everything that stayed with me was couched in metaphoric terms. "Your poetry is a seeing eye dog that leads your blind self around in the world," Yehuda Amichai, the late Israeli poet, said of that vision that comes with writing and finding the right metaphor in one's work. "Your memory is like a museum with a very selective curator," he said. "You must trust

that every object that ends up there is beautiful and meaningful because your memory selected it to remain. Even the most terrible object—like the cross—will be the most beautiful." Showing up at poetry workshop each week at NYU, Amichai couldn't keep himself from sharing his linguistic pleasures. As a speaker of English as a third or fourth language, the embedded (or dead) metaphors, lost to native speakers, were still rich and vivid for him, and at the start of each class he shared a few with us. Once he said, "Listen to this: traffic jam. Traffic jam." Then he laughed and laughed, "Think of those cars smashed up in a jar like strawberries."

The force of Amichai's work (at least for those of us who read it in translation and, therefore, without the music of the original Hebrew) depends almost entirely on metaphor. And his metaphors, like the metaphors of many European writers, are extravagant—much wilder than figures of speech that typically appear in poems written in English. Just as our essay structure permits fewer departures from linear logic than essays written in Slavic or Asian languages, so the vehicles and tenors in English metaphors

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*"Your poetry is a seeing eye dog that leads your blind self around in the world."*

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must be more closely related in scale, the point of resemblance more obvious. I don't know how to account for this, but maybe blame lies in part with our instinct for practicality and in part with Aristotle, who valued art as a metaphor for nature, and cautioned against comparisons that were out of proportion and too far fetched. Or maybe it lies with American cultural values that extend back to the Puritans. During the second half of the twentieth century, some poets in this country found the plain-spoken idiom inadequate and thus began translating and reading the works of European and South American poets, and Amichai was discovered and translated during that period. But let me show you what I mean by offering one of his small poems from *A Great Tranquility: Questions and Answers* (reprinted and newly translated in *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*).

*Forgetting Someone*

Forgetting someone is like  
forgetting to turn off the light in the back yard  
so it stays lit all the next day.

But then it's the light  
that makes you remember.

We learn by seeing things in striking and new relationship with other things. The point of resemblance can be the point of insight, but I. A. Richards has observed that the point of difference is often the greater source of meaning, because it creates tension and forces discovery. The cognitive dissonance generated by difference animates the image. In dead metaphors, particularly, we nod at similarity and miss the difference. Those figures are so deeply embedded within our consciousness that they can structure our perceptions of reality and blind us. This is the point made by Lakoff and Johnson in their important early book, *Metaphors We Live By*.

When I was teaching "Introduction to Poetry" at Messiah College, I used to ask the students to really consider what it means that Christians metaphorically conceive of their church as a body. (Of course that's a perfect Lakoff and Johnson example because it explicitly grounds perception and reason in bodily experience.) The church is a body: so hierarchy is assumed because we generally associate being "up" with being happy and well; being "down" with being ill and depressed. Therefore, based on our physical experience of our own bodies, we know that the head should be on top. We also know that our bodies have an inside and an outside, and that if our physical boundaries are penetrated, it's usually a bad thing, resulting in pain, wounds, illness from infection, possibly even death. (That's leaving sex aside for a moment—probably that's never a good idea.) When asked to imagine the implications of a church being figured as a chunky stew or

salad, rather than a body, my students were distressed. Despite, or because of, their being saturated with Biblical language and texts, they hadn't recognized those metaphors as merely figures of speech, but how much more interesting—and open to change—things might be if they had. "Reality is a cliché from which we escape by metaphor," suggested Wallace Stevens. And it is also the case that metaphor is a means by which we may change reality because it enables us to change our minds.

In the following poem, the speaker, a bewildered teacher of poetry writing who resembles this author, is confronted with a difficult student text. Only after the fact, she responds to the situation by telling a story. And as the story unfolds, she finds her way by metaphor, like a prophet, to arrive at a clearer sense of both the student's situation and her own position.

*Bat boy, Break a Leg*

The student with two studs in his nose  
and a dragon tattoo crawling from his collar,  
who seems always ready to swoon  
from bliss or despair, now flits  
at my office door. I will look at his poem  
drawn onto a music score and find nothing  
to say about chance or HIV.

Only later I'll think to tell him  
the night before I left home, I slept  
sadly in our old house until a wing  
touched my cheek, tenderly as a breeze.

I woke to black fluttering at my feet,  
and a mind fresh from the other side  
said *don't turn on the light, don't*

*Wake the man, don't scream or speak.*

*Go back to sleep.* The next morning  
I remembered that people upstate  
whack them with tennis rackets, that  
the Chinese character for good luck  
resembles the character for bat—  
both so unsettling and erratic—  
but it's bad luck to say good luck  
in China, as on stage where they say  
*Break a leg*, so delicate bats  
must be woven into silk brocade  
and glazed onto porcelain plates.

Next morning, I found a big-eared mouse  
with leather folded over his shoulders  
hanging from claws stuck in a screen.  
All day, my work made me forget, but  
then I'd remember, passing the window  
where he slept, shaded under the eaves.

He was fine. I was fine. Then at dusk,  
he was gone, suddenly. Pale boy dressed in black,  
Maybe the best that can be said for any of us is that  
once we were angelic enough to sleep with strangers.  
He touched my cheek. I opened the screen.  
He flew in his time. We did no harm.

That ending surprised me, too, calling up both Allen Ginsberg and the biblical Jacob. I now see that the poem moves toward its surprising conclusion in this way: the boy is like a bat; the bat is like luck; the bat is like a mouse; the bat is like the angel and the speaker is like Jacob; the bat is like a stranger; a stranger is like an angel; the boy is like a bat, and both of them will be safe. In each instance—as with all metaphors—the figure is made as the known gropes toward the unknown. I cannot claim that the boy is lucky, but I can say the boy is like a bat, and the bat is like luck. Metaphor must always keep one foot on the ground, which is a metaphoric way of phrasing what Aristotle knew: that metaphor falls midway between the unintelligible and the commonplace. The poem suggests that the encounter between teacher and student is like being touched by a bat, like Jacob grappling with the angel; it is that violent and strange.

**pleasure** (the shortest section, naturally.)

At around eighteen months, my daughter, Amelia, became obsessed with recognizing resemblance. She'd endlessly point out connections between things by shouting "Same, same!" The Winnie the Pooh in the storybook and the Pooh bear on her tooth brush handle. "Same, same!" The banana in the fruit bowl on the counter and the tiny wooden banana in her puzzle. "Same, same!" Colors, shapes, images, sounds—she never ceased delighting at the discovery of similitude, and it seemed an essential means of constructing the categories that enable us to learn language. I felt as if I were witnessing what Michel Foucault has called "the semantic web of resemblance" and identified as the primary epistemological method in the West. He claims that prior to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance, in various complex forms, was used to construct knowledge: it guided exegesis and the interpretation of the text of the world or the book, organized the play of symbols, illuminated things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them. *Don Quixote* represented the first significant break with that way, according to Foucault, because suddenly in that novel analogues dissolve, words detach from things, and confusion ensues.

**A**LMOST AS SOON AS AMELIA HAD LEARNED THE CONVENTIONAL names for things, she began to call them by other names. Metaphor, which initially was a useful way of creating a "temporary stay against confusion," became a game, a pleasure, and the pleasure seemed mostly to derive from deliberate departures from the norm. Only a month after "paws" took the harm out of her encounter with a new pair of mittens, she held the cord of a pull toy beside her head and dangled a wooden cat on wheels. She looked up with a smile and said, "Ear ring!" Around the

same time she stuck her fingertip into a sliced black olive and, pulling it from the pizza, laughed "Puppet!" To the huge icicles hanging from the gutters outside my study window, she shouted "Rocket, Rocket!" In all of those instances, she knew the common names for things—cat or earring, olive or puppet, icicle or rocket—but by just two years old, as the human animal is still mastering basic vocabulary, we begin to call things by other names of our own making. Thus, metaphor makes the familiar strange *on purpose*, for fun. I can only imagine the pleasure that comes from a complex discovery: an olive is not a puppet, and yet it is. The pleasure of metaphor is the pleasure of transgression—breaking the law, but breaking it gently. The pleasure of metaphor is the pleasure of both invention and association—departing from tradition to make something new, but not deviating so far that others cannot follow the discovery.

At the same time, the pleasure of "same, same!" is compounded by all the ways the things are not the same, the pleasure of meeting as well as parting. Calling objects by another name creates a temporary coupling of two unlike things, and therefore Alicia Ostriker has called metaphor "the erotic element in language." Metaphorically casting the play of meaning between two unlike things, she writes in her "A Meditation on Metaphor," ". . . the pleasure we take in metaphor is a pleasure of consent, an agreement that the distance between two things is cancellable because of their likeness, whereby each illuminates some inner truth belonging to the other." To believe in metaphor, we have to believe, temporarily at least, as the ancients did, that the world is connected through some deep web of meaning—animate and inanimate, large and small, across different points in time and place. These, of course, are huge claims with profound political and spiritual implications, tending even toward peace. On some level, I think she's saying that not only is Robert Burns's love like a red rose, but that love *likes* red roses.

Even as I am happily and enthusiastically drawn to Ostriker's erotic sensibility, I must also consider the "poethics" of experimental poet Juliana Spahr. Spahr, whose poetics is at least partly shaped by the fact that she lives in the American colony of Hawaii, is troubled by the nature of relationship as structured through metaphor, or what she calls "the joined product." She asks, in "spiderwasp or literary criticism," whether the relationship between vehicle and tenor is one of "dominion and understanding" of one thing *over* another? How is it possible to embrace another without absorbing—and thereby erasing—her or him? Can we both join with the other and retain the distinct identities of both?

As a person who not long ago walked around with another person inside her own body, I do not know how to answer that question, but I recognize its urgency. So, I end where I began, with bewilderment and a baby—and one

more poem.

*Mother with Toddler in War Time*

The first soft day after  
an intractable winter

a child, conceived before  
the Towers burned but born

after, commands a flock  
of geese: *Do this! Do this!*

as her arms flap like wings  
under their scraping songs.

The only one more vain  
is the mother who knows,

more than thinks, that nothing  
on our worn earth matters more

than this one gesture, this  
kid this instant, this lifting.

The way images work in this poem creates a kind of slippage between vehicle and tenor, as often happens in metaphors. The child, who is imitating the geese, believes that the geese are imitating her. She "commands" them the way toddlers boss the world, but given that this is all happening during war time, "command" takes another meaning. The child is like a commander-in-chief, or the commander in chief resembles a toddler? You see how metaphors unsettle power structures and replace order with eros? And the mother, apparently incapable of caring for much more than this child during a war in a distant land, is somehow lifted up and out into the world through her attention to the one life, despite or because of all that is

fallen and burning on earth. If only the desirous attention for the one could translate into an ethic of care for many. In this way, pleasure and purpose would become one. ♣

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# the Cretan glance

## toward a theory of metaphorical responsibility

Gregg Muilenberg

*The emotion I felt in walking over the ancient grounds of Knossos was so superabundantly rich, so embroiled with life and death, that I find myself unable to analyze it clearly. . . . I gazed at the bullfights painted on the walls: the woman's agility and grace, the man's unerring strength, how they played with the frenzied bull, confronting him with intrepid glances. They did not kill him out of love . . . or because they were overcome with fear and dared not look at him. Instead they played with him obstinately. . . . Perhaps with gratitude. For this sacred battle with the bull whetted the Cretan's strength. . . . Thus the Cretans transubstantiated horror, turning it into an exalted game . . . conquer[ing] without annihilating the bull . . . considered not an enemy but a fellow worker. As I regarded the battle depicted on the walls, the age-old battle between man and bull (whom today we term God), I said to myself, such was the Cretan Glance.*

Nikos Kazantzakis

SOMETIME AROUND 1978, WAYNE BOOTH IS REPUTED TO have remarked that by the year 2039 the world would have more metaphoricians than metaphysicians and more students of metaphor than people. I am living corroboration of that claim. Never has a metaphysician been more poorly suited for the study of metaphor. I was trained to translate natural language into quantified formulae of the first-order predicate calculus and to distrust any language that resisted such treatment. But I have succumbed to the sophisticated charms and bedeviling puzzles of metaphor. As conversion experiences go, mine was unremarkable. Most of my colleagues in analytic philosophy had already converted and the path was well worn. One might even venture to say that during the last two decades the study of metaphor has become an essential part of the philosophy of language. Metaphors have become serious business.

### a history of hostility

Such was not always the case. The British Empiricists, most notably Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, were champions of a view that held metaphors unworthy tools for philosophical investigation. That view dominated western philosophy until the middle of the twentieth century.

John Locke's famous condemnation of metaphor in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* is familiar to

many of us; but it is worth revisiting as a valuable reminder of the eloquent denunciation of figurative language that is so much a part of our philosophical tradition.

Since wit and fancy finds easier entertainment in the world than dry truth and real knowledge, figurative speeches and allusion in language will hardly be admitted as an imperfection or abuse of it. I confess, in discourses where we seek rather pleasure and delight than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from them can scarce pass for faults. But yet, if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow, that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheat: and therefore however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them. What and how various they are will be super-

fluous here to take notice; the books of rhetoric which abound in the world, will instruct those, who want to be informed: only I cannot but observe, how little the preservation and improvement of truth and knowledge is the care and concern of mankind; since the arts of fallacy are endowed and preferred. 'Tis evident how much men love to deceive, and be deceived, since rhetoric, that powerful instrument of error and deceit, has its established professors, is publicly taught, and has always been had in great reputation: and, I doubt not but it will be thought great boldness, if not brutality in me, to have said thus much against it. *Eloquence*, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer it self ever to be spoken against. And 'tis in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving, wherein men find pleasure to be deceived.

**H**ERE IS ELOQUENCE MARSHALED IN OPPOSITION TO eloquence—trope employed against trope, sternness against fancy. Never mind that all this seems coy and oh too witty. As Paul de Man observed, there is little epistemological risk in a flowery passage like this one [Locke's] about wit, except perhaps that it may be taken too seriously by dull-witted subsequent readers. That, of course, is exactly what happened. Some theorists add Mill to the list of plainspoken Englishmen who decry the use of metaphor. Mill's grounds of opposition, however, are more mundane but only slightly more earnest. He warns his readers in *A System of Logic* that the use of metaphor is especially likely to draw one into the fallacy of equivocation, which fallacy he contends, [is a] "fog which rose from this narrow spot [and] diffused itself at an early period over the whole surface of metaphysics."

The goal of these formidable critics was not the elimination of metaphor from all philosophical discourse. That goal would have to wait a century after Mill for the zealots of Logical Positivism. These individuals were intent merely to contain metaphor within the realm of wit and fancy where it could operate pleasantly, producing its semantic instabilities without any real harm. The realm of judgment (where real philosophy is done) is thereby spared "... being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another." Their position seems unassailable. Precise philosophical discourse does not welcome the delightful vagaries of metaphor. None of our critics actually argued that metaphor is antithetical to the concerns of serious philosophical investigation. It was simply presumed to be a detriment to clear thinking and that presumption was judged to be patently obvious for a long time. Thus, this domesticated notion of metaphor as an artistic device designed for aesthetic pleasure and incidental enlightenment, reigned supreme.

The domesticated (*aka* traditional) view had its detractors, but none were able to mount a serious challenge for want of a comprehensive theory of metaphor. Aristotle's

notion of metaphors as elliptical similes (echoed by Cicero and others), truth to tell, provided a comfortable universe of discourse. Metaphors, viewed as comparisons of things, are rendered tame and merely aesthetic. "My love is like a red, red rose" presents no challenge, only a task to be performed dutifully and sensitively. There is little or no conceptual content in the metaphor or, for that matter, in the exercise of comparative analysis. According to this view, only aesthetic appreciation and emotional confirmation are to be wrest from the consideration of the likeness amidst diversity presented by metaphors.

So it seems the epistemological caché of the traditional view of metaphor is minimal and restricted. Correspondingly, its moral responsibilities are straightforward and overt. No metaphor is either good or bad *simpliciter*. Metaphors are artistic devices that can be put to good or bad use. If the construction and utilization of a metaphor is a phenomenon restricted to the aesthetic and the rhetorical domains, then good or responsible metaphors will be witty, diverting, pleasing, and sometimes beautiful. Conversely, they should not be trite, boring, unpleasant, or ugly. Creativity and taste will be the prized attributes of the successful metaphorician. Entertainment, not enlightenment, will be the goal— aesthetic values the focus. Moral values are only minimally involved, since it is difficult to see what moral harm there could be in so harmless a pursuit. It might be viewed as morally irresponsible to create less beauty than one is capable of creating. Or it might be morally wrong to pretend to be one thing and, in fact, to be another. But that is about it. Metaphors cannot really lie or defame on this view. They cannot mislead or prevaricate. All that demands conceptual content. So, the only moral dangers in the traditionalist's woods are the disregard of aesthetic values and the impudent extension of the role of metaphor into the domain of "dry truth and real knowledge." These are genuine constraints on wanton metaphor construction but not ones to long detain us.

#### a pragmatic turn

All this will strike the modern reader as hopelessly anachronistic and clearly indefensible. The modern intellectual climate is very different. Metaphor is seen as essential not only in literary pursuits but also in the most technical theoretical endeavors. Investigations of the role of models and metaphors in the physical sciences are among the best treatments of the tropes. The modern view of metaphor argues for its cognitive and epistemological power; a power that its traditional counterpart lacks. This modern view of metaphor is premised on two fundamental contentions. First, metaphor has meaning and makes truth claims, although its meaning is different than standard or literal meaning and its truth claims cannot be mechanized in any available theory of truth. Thus, the modern view speaks of metaphorical meaning and its contribution to metaphorical truth. Second, the bridge between literal and

metaphorical meaning is seen to be paraphrase. Paraphrase enables us to capture the metaphorical meaning of metaphor in literal language and reprocess it in mechanical truth theories. For example, when a native Chicagoan says that "the Big Lake Razor is soft today," the claim is literally false. But understood metaphorically, the statement is said to be true. Paraphrased into the literal statement, "The wind from Lake Michigan is warm and pleasant today," the metaphor is given meaning and a resultant truth value.

Metaphorical responsibility, despite the charming ambiguity of the term, quickly loses its charm to contradiction and paradox on this modern view. Metaphors seem to be duplicitous devices designed to mimic literal language without being held accountable to its rigorous analysis. But that, of course, is far too harsh a general indictment. Metaphors can be used for innovative instruction, for illustration, and for theory construction, at least in the initial stages of theorizing. But we also know of instances in our disciplines where metaphor has been enlisted to aid a struggling theory by relieving it of the obligation of precise theoretical articulation; sometimes temporarily, as in the case of Quine's "web of belief," sometimes permanently, in the case of Locke's "wax tablet." Metaphors can also be used to garner emotional support for positions that are difficult to justify rationally; and they can be used to take advantage of a confusion of literal and figurative language.

I have argued elsewhere that the paraphrastic theory of metaphorical meaning is plagued with intractable difficulties. Metaphors simply are not captured by paraphrases. If they were, we would not take the trouble to make them. This situation is, however, indicative of a problem endemic to this view of metaphors. If literal truth is the goal of metaphor, why work through the superfluous medium of metaphorical meaning? Why not seek literal truth straightforwardly through literal language? No simple answer to this dilemma is forthcoming. Perhaps the modern, cognitive content approach jettisoned the traditional aesthetic approach too soon. That seems basically right to me, and may account in part for the urge to construct metaphor; but it is not quite right. Another possibility is that paraphrase is so singularly unsuccessful in capturing metaphorical meaning because there is nothing to capture. Perhaps metaphors have no meaning beyond their patently false literal meanings (e.g., razors are not soft). Perhaps metaphors are not semantic entities at all, but rather pragmatic ones. Perhaps they do not *mean*, but *do*.

In one of the first accounts of the pragmatic character of metaphor, Donald Davidson remarks that metaphor "implies a kind and degree of artistic success; there are no unsuccessful metaphors, just as there are no unfunny

jokes." Jokes by nature elicit laughter. Jokes that do not do so, are not jokes. So it is with metaphors. They must accomplish their proximate purpose too. If they do not, they are not metaphors. They may be intended as metaphors, they may be taken as metaphors, but if they do not perform the function that gives them their existence, they do not exist.

In reality this is really no harsher an indictment of metaphor than that which we make of the other figures of speech. Screams, for example, that do not alert one to danger or express fear or evidence delight are not screams but mere feignings. The efficacy characterizing metaphor is not semantic, but pragmatic. Metaphors can (in fact always do on this view) fail to *mean*; but they cannot fail to *do*. What is at question is just how they do what they do.

Not surprisingly, promoters of the pragmatic view resort to metaphors in their attempted explanations. Metaphors are said to direct our attention like the pointing of a finger. They enable us to see something we were not in a position to see before. A delightful example is T. S. Eliot's "The Hippopotamus" in which none of its constitutive sentences are really metaphors though the whole of the poem clearly is.

The broad-backed hippopotamus  
Rests on his belly in the mud;  
Although he seems so firm to us  
He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh and blood is weak and frail,  
Susceptible to nervous shock;  
While the True Church can never fail  
For it is based upon a rock.

The hippo's feeble steps may err  
In compassing material ends,  
While the True Church need never stir  
To gather in its dividends.

The 'potamus can never reach  
The mango on the mango-tree  
But the fruits of pomegranate and peach  
Refresh the Church from over sea.

The poem violently assaults our conventional ways of speaking and thinking about the church and requires us to look in a different direction by the comparison it constructs. Pointings, alludings, and intimatings are the operative entities, not metaphorical meanings. Where meaning lies, truth is close at hand. Yet there is no standard sense of truth that applies to this poem.

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Metaphors seem to alert us to aspects of the world by inviting us to make comparisons between the entities they juxtapose. But comparative analysis is not the point. In the metaphorical lyric "The Mississippi Delta is shining like a National guitar," we are not invited to draw up a list of similarities between the two compared objects and then to judge the metaphor good or bad depending on the number of shared characteristics. Rather the juxtaposed images, it seems to me, are meant to get us to see something else, something that is not shared by them in peaceful cooperation but emerges from them in their startling confrontation.

IT IS THE CONFRONTATIONAL CHARACTER OF METAPHOR that often gives it its "mysterious way." The image of the church is juxtaposed with the image of the lumbering hippopotamus and the result is in no way captured by a paraphrase or a comparison. The poem gets us to see things differently regarding the church and to pay attention to that which might not have been attended to in normal discourse. But it does not *tell* us anything. Metaphor is like the Delphic oracle: It does not speak the truth, it does not lie, it *intimates*. It appears to do so by putting odd, startling, baffling, or repulsive things together in instructive and profitable ways. Surprise is its power. The more startling the juxtaposition of images, the better and more effective the metaphor. But better in what way? If metaphors do not have metaphorical meaning and do not make metaphorical truth claims, what do they do on the pragmatic view? It seems to me that a *prima facie* case can be made for the contention that metaphor is a form of *explanation*.

Now that we have finally emerged from that long dormant period of explanation theory dominated by the covering-law model, we have come to understand that explanations belong to the pragmatic branch of language. They are designed to solve problems and can take as many forms as the natures of those problems. They are not paradigmatically true or false, but more often good or bad, effective or inappropriate, as they fulfill their purposes or fail to do so. Their ultimate purposes are multifarious and fundamental. Explanations are designed to solve problems and address needs. They can calm the fear of death, bring individuals closer together in a sense of community, prevent us from acting rashly, make us more attentive to issues beyond ourselves, and sometimes they bring us joy in knowing. Abstract theories are part of some specialized explanations but most often explanations do their work by telling stories, classifying data, reminding one of history, and by getting one to notice what might otherwise go unnoticed. Metaphor may differ slightly from other forms of explanation, involving as it does the intentional collision of images, but its family resemblance is unmistakable.

Whether or not this pragmatic theory of metaphor is correct in all its detail is not of principal concern here. I believe it is a creative and promising solution to a set of

theory-threatening problems. The pragmatic theory extricates modern cognitive theory from a roughly hewn paradox: If metaphors have cognitive content, it must be paraphrased. If the content is paraphrased, why use metaphors?

More interestingly, this problem brings to light an added dimension of metaphorical responsibility hitherto blurred by modern cognitive metaphor theory. If metaphors do not *mean* so much as *show*, and do not present truth claims so much as provide explanations, then the scope of metaphorical responsibility is broadened considerably. It will not be sufficient simply to present a purportedly true proposition with a metaphor. That responsibility to truth is not diminished by this new notion of metaphor. It is rather revered. Metaphor is never an epistemologically justifiable substitute for precise articulation of closely reasoned views designed for conceptual clarity. Literal language is primary. But when theory articulation is not the goal, but rather explanation, new responsibilities accrue. One will have to consider the need for the metaphor in its audience and the strategy for meeting that need. One will have to consider the conditional character of metaphors. They presuppose a level of knowledge on the part of the individuals seeking the explanation. Without that knowledge, the trust and intimacy required for a metaphor to explain will be broken. Thus metaphorical responsibility requires a respect for truth, a primary intellectual value; and it requires moral integrity.

#### Kazantzakis and metaphorical responsibility

Good metaphoricians must be sensitive to the need for explanation all about them. Very often that amounts to being sensitive to the need within themselves as well. This call for explanation, this need to fit the world to our experience or us to the world is the impetus for an even deeper, more subtle, variety of metaphor. The Cretan writer Nikos Kazantzakis calls this need "The Cry" and our response to it "The Struggle." These are metaphors for the life of faith in Kazantzakis's writings. In order to explain these notions, to make them other than sterile bloodless abstractions, he employed a sophisticated and powerful type of metaphor, which for want of a better term I call *living metaphors*. Let us examine this type or use of metaphor and the extraordinary moral responsibility that attends it.

In 1957, International Peace Prize winner and Nobel Literature Prize nominee Nikos Kazantzakis was laid to rest on the ramparts of his beloved Megalokastro. His was the death and burial of a radical, judged by the Greek Orthodox Church as a defamer of the official doctrines and a promulgator of new and dangerous ideas about the god-man Jesus of Nazareth. That Kazantzakis was heretical cannot be denied. That we can learn something important about the life of faith and the living metaphors he believed necessary for living faithfully is the thesis I would like to develop. I am, however, the first to admit

that I am less certain of how these living metaphors work than I am *that* they work. I have argued elsewhere that living metaphors stimulate in us a type of subtle thinking—a thinking that does not describe life but inspires one to live it a certain way. That is part of it, but there must be more. I think that more is tied to the unique responsibilities attending living metaphors. Elements of Kazantzakis's life and work give us hints.

Kazantzakis's trouble with the church began with the writing of *Askitiki* (Ασκητική), or *Spiritual Exercises*, in 1923. Critics were outraged at the iconoclastic character of this youthful work subtitled *The Saviors of God*. *Spiritual Exercises* is Kazantzakis's catechetical work and, as such, makes bold, perhaps rash, claims with little or no argument or extra-systemic support. A few examples from a section entitled "The Action" should suffice to establish this point and also serve as a foundation for a later discussion of Kazantzakis's radical religious views:

I do not care what face other ages and other people have given to the enormous, faceless essence. They have crammed it with human virtues, with rewards and punishments, with certainties. They have given a face to their hopes and fears, they have submitted their anarchy to a rhythm, they have found a higher justification by which to live and labor. They have fulfilled their duty. But today we have gone beyond these needs; we have shattered this particular mask of the Abyss; our God no longer fits under the old features.

Our hearts have overbrimmed with new agonies, with new luster and silence. The mystery has grown savage, and God has grown greater. The dark powers ascend, for they also have grown greater, and the entire human island quakes.

Let us stoop down to our hearts and confront the Abyss valiantly. Let us try to mold once more, with our flesh and blood, the new, contemporary face of God.

For our God is not an abstract thought. . . . He is not immaculate. . . . He is both man and woman, mortal and immortal, dung and spirit. . . . My God is not Almighty. He struggles for he is in peril every moment; he trembles and stumbles in every living thing, and he cries out. He is defeated incessantly, but rises again, full of blood and earth, to throw himself into battle once more.

He is full of wounds. . . . But he does not surrender; he ascends with his feet, with his hands, biting his lips, undaunted. . . . He clings to warm bodies, he has no other bulwark. He shouts for help; he proclaims a mobilization throughout the Universe.

It is our duty, on hearing his Cry, to run under his flag, to fight by his side, to be lost or to be saved with him. Within the province of our ephemeral flesh all of God is imperiled. He cannot be saved unless we save him with our own struggles; nor can we be saved unless he is saved.

My God is not All-knowing. His brain is a tangled skein of light and darkness, which he tries to unravel in the labyrinth of the flesh.

My God is not All-holy. He is full of cruelty and savage justice, and he chooses the best mercilessly. . . . He is a power that contains all things. He begets them, loves them and destroys them. And if we say, "Our God is an erotic wind and shatters all bodies that he may drive on," and if we remember that Eros always works through blood and tears, destroying every individual without mercy—then we shall approach his dread face a little closer.

This is hardly an Augustinian credo, but neither is it an alternative, heretical orthodoxy. It is not an ideology of any sort. It is something far more ethereal. It is a charter myth, a sustained metaphor for the struggle we know as the life of faith. As one of Kazantzakis's translators, Kimon Friar, has written:

His works are not solid land where a pilgrim might stake his claim, but ephemeral stopping stations of a moment where the traveler might catch his breath before he abandons them also, and again strives upward on the steep ascent, leaving behind him the bloody trail of his endeavor. The fate of all heresies is to solidify, in the petrification of time, into stable and comforting orthodoxies. It would be the deepest happiness of Nikos Kazantzakis to know that those whom his works have helped to mount a step higher on the evolutionary growth of the spirit, have smashed the Tablets of his Law. . . .

Virtually all of his later fictional works and one of the non-fictional ones (*Report to Greco*), as Kazantzakis himself contends, are properly seen as commentaries on *Spiritual Exercises*. Actually they are not commentaries so much as embodiments of his credo; living metaphors for the struggle described so graphically, yet so esoterically, in *Askitiki*. Kazantzakis uses age-old symbols and metaphors to speak about the present and, more importantly, to directly affect the future. By keeping Christ alive in our hearts, he hopes that he can aid one future [hu]man to be born one hour sooner and one drop more integrally.

This need to embody ideas in stories that live and

inspire began early in Kazantzakis' life and accompanied him throughout it.

Every one of my emotions, moreover, and every one of my ideas, even the most abstract, is made up of these four primary ingredients: earth, sea, woman and the star-filled sky. . . . Even now, in the most profound moments of my life, I experience these four terrifying elements with exactly the same ardor as in my infancy. Only then, when I succeed in re-experiencing them with the same astonishment, fright, and joy they gave me as an infant, do I feel—even today—that I am experiencing these four terrifying elements deeply, as deeply as my body and soul can plunge. . . . [T]he four joined indissolubly inside me and became one.... Within me, even the most metaphysical problem takes on a warm physical body which smells of sea, soil and human sweat. The Word, in order to touch me, must become warm flesh. Only then do I understand—when I can smell, see, and touch.

Myths and metaphors for the life of faith, once vivid, have become definitions and necessary truths. God is love. God is our Shepherd. God is our Almighty Father. God has prepared a Great Mansion for us. Faith is like a Rock. These we believe; on these we stand. But they are not guides for living a vibrant life of faith. They are dead metaphors. They are Tablets of Law to be treated with cool, confident indifference. But living the life of faith is not a matter of mastering a creed, adopting a contentious simplification, or sleep stumbling through a series of ritualized "Christ-encounters." Kazantzakis believes it is a battle. A battle that we hope, but cannot know, we will win. We can take courage from the fact that God is in the same battle, but we are terrified by the fact that God is wounded everywhere. God is not almighty, waiting with crossed hands for certain victory. God's fate is in our hands, as ours is in God's. These are the spiritual lessons we need to embody with our lives and Kazantzakis can teach us how to do so.

A careful reading of Kazantzakis's works will impress even the tyro with the depth of his religiosity. He may have been a heterodox, but he was never indifferent. He was heterodoxical because he could not be indifferent to religion. As he remarks in *Report to Greco*:

The face of Christ had fascinated me indescribably ever since my childhood. I had followed Him on the icons as he was born, reached His twelfth year, stood in the rowboat and raised His hand to make the sea grow calm; then as he was scourged and crucified, and as he called out upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" After that, as one fine morning He rose from the tomb and ascended into heaven, clasping a white pennon in his hand. Seeing Him, I too was scourged, I too was crucified and resurrected. And

when I read the Bible, the ancient tales came to life: man's soul seemed a savage, slumbering beast bellowing in its sleep. Suddenly the heavens open and Christ descended. He kissed this beast, whereupon it sighed sweetly, awakened and became what it had always been: a superbly beautiful princess.

So also, in a moving description of an encounter or a dream he had during his six-month pilgrimage to Mt. Athos, he says:

[T]he only thing I found as I roamed the Holy Mountain was a veteran campaigner (so he seemed to me at first) holding out his wounded hands to the monks that passed. . . . Shivering, his eyes filled with tears, he knocked on every door, but no one admitted him. He was chased from monastery to monastery, and the dogs ran in back of his ragged cloak and barked. One evening I saw him seated on a stone gazing at the desolate sea. . . . For a while he remained silent, but then, unable to restrain himself any longer, he suddenly cried out, "The foxes have their holes, but I have not where to lay my head!" A flash tore across my mind; I recognized Him and ran to kiss his hand. I had loved Him when I was a small child and loved Him ever since. Now I searched everywhere, but he had become invisible. Feeling aggrieved, I sat down on the stone where he had been sitting. Oh if I could only open my heart to him so that He might enter it and not have to wander homeless and cold.

**K**AZANTZAKIS WAS NOT A RELIGIOUS MAN, BUT HE hoped he was a profoundly religious one. Religion is about comfort and reward. Profound religion is about struggle. It is about following "the bloody trail, the thin red line of ascent" as Kazantzakis so often describes it. The roots of this struggle appear everywhere in Kazantzakis but always in images and stories. I hope to make clear the reason for that directly. But for now let me simply list these roots (something Kazantzakis would never do) in the hope that the connection to the life of faith will be more apparent.

The profoundly religious person, God's struggler, is marked by three traits. First of all, such a person is committed to the truth—the truth about the world, about ourselves, and the truth about God. This truth is uncomfortable and it cannot be made more palatable by fashioning accommodating lies or self-satisfying idols. Knowing the truth is dangerous and it produces wounds, the wounds of doubt, as Kazantzakis calls them. His wounds were grievous and resulted from his despair that Christ had killed Apollo and Darwin had killed Christ, as he so cryptically put it. We all have such wounds. They will never heal but they must be ignored in order to continue the struggle.

Secondly, the profoundly religious person is committed to the power of the spirit. This commitment is evident in the struggle to transform the world, to spiritualize it in a second act of creation helping to fulfill God's creation. Faith put over knowledge does not heal the wounds. That would replace knowledge with easy religion, an all too common mistake. Faith is rather the will to struggle despite the wounds and to believe in the power of the spiritual to transform knowledge into faith sufficient to sustain the struggle. This relationship of struggling is difficult to capture in the descriptive language of "dry truth and knowledge" and it is trivialized in the abstractions of religion. Consequently, one must resort to art. Only art—the creation of images, metaphors, and myths—can point to the struggle and inspire us to fight on. This, then, is the third mark of the profoundly religious person. Such a person understands the necessity of myth, or systems of metaphors, in living the life of faith, in transforming flesh into spirit. Kazantzakis understood this necessity well. It was the only way he could write and the only thing he could write about. This transubstantiation of knowledge into faith and faith into action through the use of myth is the single greatest insight he has left us. He describes his writing in the same terms. "I swaggered as I wrote. Was I not God, doing as I pleased, transubstantiating reality, fashioning it as I should have liked it to be—as it should have been? I was joining truth and falsehood indissolubly together. No there were no longer any such things as truth and falsehood; everything was soft dough which I kneaded and rolled according to the dictates of whim, without securing the permission from anyone."

The struggle has many faces. It is the struggle of the oppressed to free themselves of their oppressors. It is the struggle of the rich to free themselves of their comforts. It is the struggle of the believers to free themselves from doubt and contradiction. It is the struggle of the pious to free themselves of their smugness. All these struggles are one according to Kazantzakis. They are all attempts to spiritualize matter—attempts to accomplish what God accomplished—attempts to save God.

THE PROCESS OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION, WHICH Kazantzakis affords the highest place in his worldview, and which he characterizes as our greatest obligation, is rarely discussed and never analyzed. It is also known as "the struggle" because it must persist, even flourish, without destroying the commitment to truth. It is difficult to describe, but it is all about us. It is in the flower that blossoms from the mud. It is in the painting that embodies the experiences of the artist. It is in the laughter that explodes from the full belly of the child. Although these metaphors for the process of turning flesh into spirit do not define it; they do, however, help us to bring it into our own lives. That they do so evidences our commitment to the transforming power of the spiritual. They are

evidence of the power of metaphor to put flesh on the bleached bones of theory. Living metaphors require more than merely the interpretative action. They require changes in one's life.

Kazantzakis' works are replete with examples, but I will look at three important types, beginning with a group of rather simple and straightforward metaphors (though no less effective for their simplicity) and ending with some complicated and subtle ones. In all this the purpose is the same. Metaphors and myths alone hold the power to sustain us in the struggle, and to direct us toward our goal of saving God.

When Kazantzakis wants to describe the struggle for us, whether it is the struggle we call the life of faith, the struggle to fulfill our potential, to bear our obligation to our ancestors. . . . whatever the struggle, he very often appeals to metaphors involving his favorite creatures. Among the dozens of creatures from roosters to monkeys, from dung beetles to goats, none appears so often as the flying fish, the chrysalis, and the silk worm. These creatures serve as metaphorical, flesh and blood embodiments of the nature of that struggle. Kazantzakis claims that he has always felt a mystical unity with these three of God's creatures for he always imagined that they symbolized the route of his soul. The chrysalis, whose struggle is to transform itself into a thing of beauty, responds to the natural rhythms and harmonies that surround it and sustain it. It cannot be hurried, nor can it be helped along its ascent from mud-encrusted worm to free-floating butterfly. We too, he believed, were made grubs by God in order that we, by our own efforts, could become butterflies.

Similarly, the silk worm struggles to transform its guts into glistening strands. It does not alter its form, as does the chrysalis, but actually transubstantiates its matter into something more ethereal and beautiful. The flying fish are even more remarkable. They are not content to live in their element but strive to transcend it. If only for a few brief moments, they escape to a world beyond them, a world which cannot possibly be theirs, but which they dare to invade nonetheless. Kazantzakis says, "I experienced equal joy and excitement at seeing the flying fish on the frescoes at Knossos, seeing it soar above the sea on the wings that it developed. Now, a thousand years later, I was faithfully following in their footsteps: I too was transforming Cretan earth into wings."

Each of these creatures struggles to change, to become, to create, to transubstantiate. The change cannot be distinguished from the struggle, or the struggle from the change. This is one of the reasons why they serve as good metaphors for the life of faith. The goal of that struggle, too, cannot be distinguished from the struggle itself.

I will conclude these examples with a metaphor so powerful and so radical that I am not sure that it is a metaphor so much as a vision. Kazantzakis is describing his state of mind when he began to write the *Last Temptation*

of Christ. Perhaps the transforming power of living metaphors is even greater than I have suggested.

As I stared into the dying flames, I saw the panic-stricken Disciples gathered together in the attic. "The Rabbi is dead, he is dead." They were awaiting nightfall so they could leave Jerusalem and disperse. But a woman jumped up. She alone refused to accept His death, for Christ had risen in her heart. Barefooted, unkempt, half naked, she ran toward the tomb at the break of day. Certain she would see Christ, she saw Him; certain that Christ had been resurrected, she resurrected Him. "Rabbi!" she cried, and inside the tomb the Rabbi heard her voice, bounded to his feet, and appeared to her at dawn light, walking on the springtime grass.

Kazantzakis makes living metaphors in order to live those metaphors. He says that in creating Odysseus he made him to view the abyss straight in the eye with a Cretan glance, and "in creating him, I strove to resemble him. I myself was being created." Metaphor can be put to no more powerful use. Explanation is no longer the goal, commitment is.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES ATTENDING THIS USE OF LIVING metaphors, like those of the other types before, are rather easily deduced. If living metaphors are designed to change peoples' lives, then they ought not promote morally evil lives—lives dominated by hatred, fear, revenge, etc. The responsibilities appear to be much more overtly moral than those associated with the previous types of metaphors. Those responsibilities were predominantly aesthetic and intellectual and only by implication moral. But when one constructs and employs living metaphors the responsibility is unavoidably moral.

But the situation is actually more complicated than that. Few would construct these metaphors with an overtly evil design. The Athenians did not frame charter myths in praise of xenophobia and gynophobia as cultural virtues. They designed them as clever and subtle deceits in order to further perverse values they secretly held higher than justice or truth. It was obviously immoral for them to do so, but life does not often present itself obviously. Rarely do evil metaphors promote explicitly immoral agenda. They are more often enlisted in more covert pursuits. Living metaphors can be used to evade serious issues, utilizing myths that disregard the truth and evade the struggle the truth presents. For example, when one employs "bootstrap metaphors" to explain how the disadvantaged in our society should extricate themselves from degradation by exercising free will, one is using metaphor to disguise an abstraction that misleads and evades the truth. The truth is that moral development and reclamation require a supportive and sustaining community. Freewill does not suffice.

Similarly, metaphors that present God as a benevolent father guiding children safely through the perils of life to the ultimate reward mislead and evade the truth that the life of faith is a battle, with no assurance of victory, but only the obligation that one fight the fight. The principal responsibility of the metaphorician constructing living metaphors is to honor truth through art—art that is able to sustain the struggle truth presents.

Kazantzakis tells the story of a Cretan he once met (or dreamt of) offering this advice:

When you appear before the heavenly gates and they fail to open, do not take hold of the knocker to knock. Unhitch the musket from your shoulder and fire.

"Do you actually believe God will be frightened into opening the gates?"

"No, lad, He won't be frightened. But he will open them because He'll realize you are returning from battle."

Never did I hear from an educated person words so profound as those I heard from peasants, especially from oldsters who had completed the struggle. Their passions had subsided within them; they stood now before death's threshold, tenderly casting a final, tranquil glance [a Cretan Glance] behind them.

Kazantzakis's use of metaphor is both subtle and powerful. Because it is so, it is also dangerous, for it has the power to change us. It has the power to enable or equip us for the struggle that is the life of faith. Nothing else can put vibrant flesh on the dry bones of theodicy. Nothing else can rally us to climb following the thin red line. This is not the metaphor of fancy, nor even the metaphor of truth. It is the metaphor of action, and consequently the metaphor of moral responsibility. The Athenian charter myths were not distasteful or false. Such categories did not apply to them. They were morally evil. They changed individuals, teaching them how to hate without feeling it and how to fear without knowing it.

The defense against this misuse of metaphor is knowledge; not the knowledge of true and false propositions but the knowledge of how images can inspire and produce action. This "logic of subtle thinking" is not yet a discipline but it must become one as we come to understand and acknowledge the real power of art in our lives. ♣

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# music as an exegetical act?

John Ferguson

YES, THE TITLE OF THESE MUSINGS ENDS WITH A QUESTION mark. Speculation and disagreement over the evocative, provocative power of music as a communicative medium is, of course, perennial. Nevertheless, I believe that music has enormous potential to communicate, to unpack and interpret ideas, indeed to function exegetically. As a church musician, this cognitive dimension of my art has always fascinated and frightened me—fascinated because as composer or interpreter (performer) I'm able to communicate my ideas and understandings as I make music. But it has frightened me for the same reasons. I would be the first to admit that what I've just asserted—that music has enormous potential both to communicate and to develop ideas—is not accepted by all persons, perhaps not even all musicians, and for many there are limits to this interpretive, exegetical dimension of music. Here I'd like to explore the exegetical dimensions of music, experiment a bit with some of the possibilities, and then provide a specific deconstruction of a setting of the *Magnificat*, a composition that was produced specifically for this Lilly Fellows Program national conference and with this talk in mind.

To begin, let me identify a few fundamentals of my thinking about music as exegetical art. I think of music as a rhetorical art form in the sense that it is a kind of language complete with its own system of grammar and concepts that are unpacked through a systematic study of music theory, a part of every undergraduate music major's experience. Music is not specific in the way that words can be, but it does have the potential to communicate ideas and, for performers or composers, part of its communicative potential is unlocked by an understanding of how music is organized and how it functions.

Scholars considering music's expressive capabilities often separate music into two categories: *absolute music* and *programmatic music*. Absolute music is pure, organized sound. We experience it and react to it depending upon how its sounds to our own experiential being. It cannot be specific in the way that programmatic music can be. Programmatic music has a story that accompanies it. For example, in the storm movement from *William Tell*, the wind blows up, then the rain begins. Next there is thunder, increasingly violent. Finally, the thunder and rain subside,

and there is calm after the storm. (*An excerpt from William Tell is played.*)

Music with sung text is a special kind of programmatic music. Here, because words interact with musical gestures, music can become more specific and can paint a reasonably specific picture. An example: Sunrise in "Oh Day Full of Grace" (a recorded example of a musical "sunrise" from F. Melius Christiansen's "O Day Full of Grace.") Certainly this is an example of music as exegetical art: a specific kind of sunrise—a wondrous, celestial sunrise—is presented, though there are, of course, other types of sunrises.

It is time for a parenthesis: The challenge to the composer of programmatic music is to be cautious lest he or she be too specific. Last week during our Wednesday daily chapel, Susan Bauer, the choreographer for the dance setting of Psalm 23 that was shared at the vespers service last night, observed that the artist needs to be careful about becoming too literal. She encouraged a more abstract approach to choreography. In the same way, being too literal in a musical setting risks turning the musical setting into a parody and for composer and performer this fine line is a tightrope to be negotiated carefully.

Let's return to my fundamentals. Absolute music, and not just programmatic music, can be exegetical to a surprising, even an amazing, degree. Since my passion is church music, congregational as well as choral, we will explore this exegetical potential in absolute music.

Can a tune, in and of itself, convey a spirit or make a statement? Let's try some experiments with some familiar hymns, "Amazing Grace," and "Joy to the World." (*The audience sings each text to its traditional tune and then, reverses, singing each text to the other's tune.*) Now, we do have a problem here. We know these tunes in relation to specific texts. It is easy to propose that our understanding of the *geist*, the spirit, the nature of these tunes is so bound up in our associations with specific texts that we cannot make an impartial assessment of the nature of the tune. Our objectivity seems to have been destroyed by experience.

Let's try some other examples. First, "When in Our Music God is Glorified." (*The audience sings this text with the tune ENGELBERG as it appears in With One Voice 802. The audience then sings the text with the tune FREDERICK-TOWN, Lutheran Book of Worship 555.*) Note how with

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Music is a  
kind of  
language....

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ENGELBERG the hymn seems more proud, with the other tune more humble, especially because the musical line for the Alleluia refrain “bows down” rather than ascends, as in the first tune. Now consider “What a friend we have in Jesus.” Compare our stereotypic way of singing this text and tune to recasting the tune as black gospel. In our original way the “friend” seems more like a soft, cuddly teddy bear; sung as black gospel, Jesus, our friend, seems more like a strong, sturdy lion—a protector.

Another consideration which has always fascinated me is that music is one of the arts that is experienced with a mediator, a person in the middle, as it were. The audience responds immediately to the painter’s work, but there is a performer in between the composer’s artwork and the audience. An implication of this, I think, is that a composer may set out to exegete a text, to paint a musical picture, but that process relies upon the performers for completion. The performers also interpret (sometimes unwittingly) the text, changing the hues and colors of the picture.

**A** PERFORMER’S RESPONSIBILITY IS, THUS, ENORMOUS. WE all have experienced hearing a set of numbers on the telephone—lifeless, clearly done by machine; all of us have heard a Scripture passage read by someone who has no idea what the words mean—it’s as if someone knows how to pronounce a language perfectly but has no idea what the words mean to convey. In the same way some performances reveal that the performers don’t understand the music; they haven’t considered (in the case of music with text) the implications of that text in relation to the musical setting of the text.

Music didn’t start out that way. The mediator, the person in the middle, is a relatively recent development in art music or much traditional Church Music. Over most of music’s history, the composer was the performer, either as singer or instrumentalist or as conductor. Today the composer lets go. Since no performance instructions in a score can be totally exhaustive, the composer must let go and trust the performers, invite them to collaborate in bringing an expressive construct to life.

Now, let’s move from these more general considerations to a specific application, a case study in exegetical composition, a Magnificat for a worship service during a Lilly Conference. To set the stage, I’d like to read a poem by Gardner McFall:

#### The News

She was going about an ordinary day,  
pondering dinner, washing a dish,  
or sweeping the floor. Maybe  
she was standing in the garden  
or had come in from the garden  
to sit by the window and rest.  
Perhaps she had taken up a book

or remembered the unfinished sewing  
when she encountered an angel  
in the middle of the room.

Of course, she was shocked,  
though the angel offered a host  
of assurances. Whatever she thought,  
she didn’t hang her head in chagrin,  
collapse in a rattled heap,  
or race from the house. Neither  
did she act like she’d won the lottery  
and could lord it over everyone,

but, no doubt, picked up the sewing,  
the book, the broom, or the dish  
in which she glimpsed her reflection,  
a woman without any special features  
except for the yellow nimbus now  
hovering around her head, someone  
who didn’t even try to strike  
a deal with the messenger,  
though she was certainly going to  
give up a lot being part of this plan.

The story of the Magnificat as told in the Gospel of Luke has always moved and fascinated me. Theologians suggest that Mary was a young woman; the poem just heard reminds us of the ordinariness of this person who suddenly discovers that God has great plans for her. She travels to visit her relative Elizabeth, who is also pregnant. Elizabeth is overwhelmed and cries out, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Mary, also overwhelmed by these momentous happenings, bursts into song, “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

As one considers this canticle, at least two major questions arise. First, there is a kind of tension in the text. It is partially a song of praise—*My soul magnifies the Lord*—yet partially a profound statement about social justice—*God has put down the mighty and exalted the humble*. How is it that this young woman speaks with such profundity? Perhaps she grew up knowing such words from the Psalms of the Old Testament and the song of Hannah and her faith experience just welled up in her and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, it just poured out. Or, Luke wanted to make some points and put them in Mary’s voice.

Either way, this poem presents a challenge for someone who sets it to music. Is it an essay addressing significant societal issues? Or is it the response of a stunned teenager, flabbergasted and anxious to tell the news that she is going to have a baby?

The second issue, thesecond question for the composer to address, is the scope of the piece. There are many wonderful, larger settings of the Magnificat. In a useful little book, *The Magnificat—Musicians as Biblical*

*Interpreters*, Samuel Terrieu does a wonderful job of analyzing some of these larger settings that, in today's church music practice, I consider to be more concert settings than liturgical settings.

However, because the Magnificat was chosen as a canticle to be sung during one of the daily monastic offices, smaller, liturgical settings have been produced over the centuries, probably numbering in the thousands. Yet, many of these settings—especially those in English, most of which come from the English Anglican cathedral/collegiate choral tradition—are too difficult for most church choirs to tackle.

Now, in addition to Evening Prayer, its original liturgical “home,” the Magnificat appears in the ecumenical lectionary during Advent, yet another opportunity for it to be sung at worship in a liturgical setting, if the setting is compact enough to work as an element in a larger liturgical construct. So we have two considerations: (1) How do we approach the text—is it essentially a joyful song of praise or will we emphasize the profound social implications of the text? And (2) for whom do we set the text—will it be difficult and performed primarily by professionals or more accessible for many more typical choirs?

I HAVE CHOSEN TO SET THE PIECE AS THE SONG OF AN amazed young person, essentially a sunny, simple, happy song of praise. Most of the piece is in triple meter—a waltz of praise, a happy dance from someone so excited, so amazed, by what is happening to her that she rushes off to share the news with her relative, Elizabeth. I have chosen to set the text in a manner accessible enough for church choirs to be able to learn it, even during the pressure of a busy Advent season. Yes, I know at our conference we heard it sung by a college choir, a group more sophisticated than many church choirs. Yes, I know I'm blessed to work with such talented singers. But, I'm not *that* blessed. Over two-thirds of the choir is new this year; we've only been together for six weeks; and even though we may rehearse three days a week, at no time is everyone present because the realities of life here are that choir conflicts with other activities, including science labs. This is not a complaint—it's merely a rehearsal of realities. We are more like a church choir than some might imagine. Neither the organ part nor the trumpet part of the piece is that difficult; so I hope this piece is something that can be used out there, not just in here.

Another useful thing, I believe, is that this setting uses the words of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Most English settings use the elegant King James Version. Especially in the context of the ecumenical lectionary, it seemed appropriate to use the NRSV. As I began work on the piece I thought, “How about telling the larger story, placing the Magnificat in its Biblical context?” So this piece has two parts, the story leading up to the Magnificat and the canticle itself. The canticle portion can stand alone or it can serve as

conclusion to the entire story as told in Luke 1:26–55.

Part One is envisioned for reader, trumpet, and organ. If possible (and when blessed with a marvelous musician like Marty Hodel of the St. Olaf music faculty) the more mellow voice of the flugelhorn can substitute for the trumpet, adding a new color to the mix. In this part we tell the story leading up to the canticle. Part Two, for choir, trumpet, and organ, is the canticle itself. Now, a comment or two about the musical structure of the piece.

Music as an art form unfolds over time; for the composer a major concern is always the ordering of time, the coherent unfolding of musical events. One of the most common organizational techniques is statement, contrast, restatement. (It's a little bit like the cliché about speeches—first you tell them what you will say, then you say it, then you tell them what you've said.) The challenge in setting a Biblical text is that it often doesn't reflect this kind of structure; it is through-composed.

In the case of the canticle itself, I chose to divide the text into three parts: an opening section of praise, a middle section exploring the social justice themes in the text, and a last section in the spirit of the first, an affirmation of thanksgiving for God's constancy. Thus the musical ABA'—statement, contrast, modified restatement—form carries the text logically, resulting in a musical coherence not possible if one generates all new musical material for a through-composed text.

Then, for the introductory, narrative portion of the piece, written after the canticle setting, I chose to excerpt musical gestures, especially the principal A theme, thus unifying the narrative Part One with the canticle, Part Two. Part One also explores its own statement, contrast, restatement structure, thus providing an underlying musical, structural cohesion independent from the narrative.

It is up to the listener to determine whether all of this works. No matter how creative the “structure,” the final consideration is not just structural coherence but a more basic question, “Does it work?”

ARE THERE SPECIFIC EXEGETICAL MOVES, SPECIFIC TEXT painting musical gestures in the piece? Well, the middle section slows a bit, gives us more time to consider the profound implications of the text. The rich are sent away empty as first the organ and then the women drop out, with the men left holding a single, “empty,” pitch. The proud are scattered energetically through repeated, layered rhythmic patterns in trumpet and choir, reflecting the sound and meaning of the word, scattered. These are not radically dramatic musical things, yet the text did influence the musical fabric and gestures at these places.

As I worked with and manipulated the musical materials in this piece, especially the “licks” for flugelhorn and trumpet, I began to wonder about something else. Is it possible that we don't know the most important portions of Mary's song? Is it possible that this song of praise was

accompanied by sighs too deep for words, by ecstatic shouts that transcended words? Perhaps without first intending it, the soaring lines of the flugelhorn and trumpet become companion to the words of the canticle, suggesting once again that when mere words are inadequate, pure song—gracious, soaring melody—takes over.

Now let's listen to a recording of this Magnificat. After sharing some of what influenced my compositional work, I hope you will be enabled to listen with different ears—not better ears, just different ones. (Readers may listen to this piece at our website <http://www.valpo.edu/cresset>)

A sentence in our music department mission statement reads: *Inspired by the conviction that music is a divine gift, we will continue to cultivate a spirit of exploration and innovation, seeking and celebrating the transcendent and*

*transforming power of music.* Working, teaching, making music in this college of the church is wonderful because I am affirmed in my attempts to embrace the challenge and joy of synthesizing my faith with my discipline. Making and teaching music here can be duty and delight. Certainly it is *not* just work. Certainly it *is* vocation. ✠

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## integrating faith and learning?

Michael Beaty

**D**URING THE LAST THIRTY YEARS, THE CONVERSATION about the role of religious identity in the academic practices of Protestant colleges or universities has been centered largely on what some refer to as “the integration model.” While the antecedents for this model predate it, the publication of Arthur Holmes’ book, *The Idea of a Christian College* (1975), focused attention on integrating faith and learning because Holmes argued that this (and only this) ideal distinguished secular from Christian higher education. Moreover, he argued that integration fits best with our deepest and widest theological commitments.

This ideal of integration has been influential in two important ways. First, many Protestant Christian colleges or universities have intentionally adopted this language of “integrating faith and learning” as a way of expressing their missions as religiously-identified institutions of higher education in distinction from their secular counterparts. Second, in so doing, many have linked the self-conscious embrace of the language and practice of integration to institutional resistance to secularization. Indeed, the publication of edited or authored books by George Marsden, *Secularization and the American Academy* (1992), *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (1994), and *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (1997), further fueled the notion that various scholarly practices of integration not only identify what is distinctive about religiously-identified colleges and universities, but also that institutional commitment to integration is an essential resource against secularization.

*Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* by Douglas and Rhonda Jacobsen attempts to break with these themes and the trajectory of Protestant higher education in significant ways. The authors’ announced aim is to enlarge the conversation about the nature and role of Christian scholarship by providing a framework that better enables persons who embody different styles of Christian scholarship to converse respectfully and intelligently with one another and with their non-religious peers in the academy. The authors want to encourage Christian scholars and the institutions they inhabit and the traditions they embody to think more capaciously, constructively, and conversationally about the nature of, and prospects for, Christian scholarship. Thinking capaciously includes a serious invitation to

scholars from different Christian traditions to think anew about how their particular angle of vision or their charisms might enrich both teaching and scholarship, not only within their own institutions, but also as they converse with others in the shared work of enlarging what we know and love about the world. With this professed aim of the book, readers will eagerly, easily, and happily agree.

**T**HE BOOK OPENS WITH A PROLOGUE BY FORMER MESSIAH College president, Rodney Sawatsky, in which he declares that the worries about increasing secularization in our culture in general, and in the American academy or university culture in particular, are ideological and pathological and not real worries. We then find five chapters authored by the Jacobsens. Each of their chapters is complemented by an essay from a faculty colleague from Messiah. Chapter One, “More Than the “Integration” of Faith and Learning” critiques the integration model, and the complementary essay offers an alternative metaphor—“*imbricating*.” Chapter Two, “Living the Questions of Learning and Faith,” explores the personal dimension of Christian scholarship, emphasizing both the existential and social nature of scholarship, in contrast to its logical and abstract dimensions, hence its complexities, on the one hand, and its practical, non-esoteric character, on the other. The complementary essay, “Is There a Christian History of Science?” aims to show that moving from an earlier form of “history of science” scholarship that privileges the logical dimension of scientific inquiry over the personal and social to one that gives the greater weight to the latter has produced both a more accurate picture of science and has undercut the myth that science and religion are necessarily at war with one another. Chapter Three, “Scholarship and the Varieties of Christian Faith,” affirms “the traditioned nature of our thinking” and, thus, that different traditions of faith and learning will and ought to exhibit different approaches to the matter of relating faith and learning in teaching and scholarship. In short, we should expect a pluralistic rather than a monolithic approach to Christian scholarship and faith and learning. The complementary essay argues that there are distinctive Anabaptist themes implied by the Anabaptist understanding of faith including, among others, commitments to nonviolence and to serving the poor and oppressed. Characteristic kinds of research, thus Christian scholar-

ship, the authors suggest, will emerge from these commitments. Chapter Four, "Scholarship Defined and Embodied," expands the notion of scholarly practice beyond the typically analytic or empirical methods to include strategic aims and empathetic modes and motives. With its complementary essay, this chapter contends that disinterested scholarship is often inadequate to the realities we study and that faith, as instinctual and passionate, rightly completes scholarship, as an ally rather than a competitor. Chapter Five, "Contours and Contexts of Christian Scholarship," explores the creative interaction between faith and learning which benefits both the church and the academy, affirming Christian scholarship as including a self-critical but committed faith, one capable of serving the world through serving the church.

**T**HE BOOK HAS MANY POSITIVE FEATURES. LET ME FOCUS on two of its strong points. First, the Jacobsens and their colleagues at Messiah draw attention to the fact that the way in which the integration of faith and learning has been implemented in many Christian colleges or universities and the way in which integration has been expressed by some Christian scholars have had overall deleterious consequences. Thus, we should read their book as a corrective of certain identifiable, overblown, and even self-defeating tendencies. For example, they and their colleagues are right that certain tendencies prevail among some institutions that embrace and use the language of integration. Some advocates of faith and learning speak as if the intellectual world is wholly hostile and unwilling to permit Christian scholars to participate fairly in the "tournament of narratives." Consequently, warfare metaphors come to dominate the discussion and either conquest, siege, or ghetto mentalities become the unhealthy but dominant way of engaging the larger academic culture. Arrogance and triumphalism or despair and defeatism are sometimes the dominant attitudes on display.

In addition, the rhetoric of some institutions or some scholars may suggest that authentic Christian scholarship is expressed as a "worldview" which gives a systematic and complete account of not only the main topic, but also its connection to the much larger arena of issues fundamental to human beings, and thus the rhetoric provides much too tidy answers to all the practical and theoretical questions human beings are inclined to ask. Third, all too often only intellectual matters are emphasized. Thus, faith becomes merely "propositional" and integration is primarily about theoretical issues, an exercise that favors the disciplines of philosophy and theology. Consequently, some disciplines will regard the integration model as being irrelevant to their work, except insofar as one construes faith as primarily about such things as caring for students, and consisting, privately, only in the right relationship to God in Christ.

These are real worries and we should affirm the valuable correctives suggested by the Jacobsens and their

colleagues. Correctives include viewing non-Christian scholarship as a welcome source of new ideas, affirming the task of seeking truth wherever it may be found, having no expectation that, necessarily, faith requires a systematic and complete account of how faith and all the disciplines fit together, and emphasizing not only the intellectual but also the non-intellectual dimensions of integration. Faith is ultimately about our whole orientation to God and God's creative and redemptive initiatives. Thus, faith includes not only our thoughts and beliefs, but also our affections and our actions.

Furthermore, the book raises a very important theoretical question. Is "integrating faith and learning" a model or is it a metaphor? On the one hand, I contend that "integration" is a useful metaphor, and that despite some limitations of the metaphor, no practice of Christian education that does not understand its primary activity as that of the integration of faith and learning—in some sense—is as robustly faithful as it should be. On the other hand, I deny that it is necessary that Christians have a systematic theory of integration in order for "integration" to be a useful metaphor. Indeed, the book's own critique of the integration model and the various authors' best efforts to provide an alternative to it support the usefulness of the ideal of "integration of faith and learning" as a metaphor.

What can be said about integration as a metaphor? First, it rules out a certain kind of secularization—call it "strong secularization"—that claims Christian faith has no place in the university. On this view, neither curricular (except as a matter of descriptive study) nor extracurricular expressions of religious identity are permitted. For example, no administrator or faculty member may offer a prayer at a convocation or at the beginning of class for any reason, though all faculty could treat students kindly and justly.

Second, the metaphor of "integrating faith and learning" rules out "weak secularization" as well. "Weak secularization" admits that the Christian faith has a place in Christian universities, but only in the extra-curricular dimensions of such universities. On this view, while faith may complement the intellectual tasks of the university, it must remain essentially distinct from those intellectual tasks and practices. For example, a Christian college or university may rightly encourage a variety of religious practices as non-curricular and non-academic opportunities in an effort to nourish the religious dimension of its students (and faculty and staff), but it should restrict such influence from "encroaching" into academic practices. Voluntary bible studies, retreats, mission trips, and the like are permissible, but not, for example, a required academic course on the normative aspects of Christian pacifism for students at an Anabaptist college.

What is included within the parameters of the metaphor "integrating faith and learning" as acceptable views and practices? To begin, it rejects both strong and

weak secularization as I have construed them above. In brief, and as a formal matter, the integration metaphor suggests that not only is it permissible for the Christian faith to have a role in the Christian university, but also that that role includes both the non-curricular and the curricular. Moreover, it insists that the relationship need not go only one way, *from learning to faith*. Indeed, the integration metaphor permits Christian scholars to challenge the criteria of their academic disciplines on what counts as good scholarship or on whether X is an adequate theory, not only on purely standard disciplinary grounds, but also on grounds that the criteria is in conflict with essentials that are included with the domain of faith. For example, for a time, only claims that were consistent with the notion of the human being as a complex of behaviors best understood when reduced to stimuli and responses were candidates for acceptable psychological theories or explanations. Since not only on purely philosophical grounds, but also on faith-related grounds, Christians believe that humans are more than mechanistic accounts admit, it is appropriate for Christians to challenge such theoretical accounts. In short, the relation between faith and learning may go both ways.

That the relation of faith and learning may go both ways presumes the following. First, the Christian faith includes commitment to the truth of at least a small set of theological propositions. Second, that these propositions, or statements entailed by them, can in principle and will in practice, stand in epistemic relations to propositions in various academic disciplines (learning), for example, these theological propositions may be compatible with or incompatible with claims typically assumed in a discipline. When there is a conflict between disciplinary and faith commitments, Christian scholars ought to attempt to resolve the conflict. The integration metaphor, formally, does not prescribe how that adjudication goes. Much more content has to be filled in to do so and surely it can vary across particular Christian traditions as well as across the various academic disciplines with their unique criteria and particular practices. Fourth, because the metaphor, the "integration of faith and learning," has theological and philosophical roots in unity-in-diversity, it is not surprising that many scholars will seek a coherent and unified understanding of the universe, society, and the human good that incorporates theological insights. Still, it does not seem to me that those who use the metaphor are committed to the necessity of producing a systematic and comprehensive "world-view." Moreover, I do not think that Christian scholars must have a model or grand theory of integration. And, perhaps, this admission might ameliorate some of the concerns that motivated the Jacobsens and their colleagues to write the book.

Similarly, we might imagine that what worries the Jacobsens most is that the effort to produce a single, monolithic and exclusionary understanding of the relation of faith and learning is that not only is it principally a theoret-

ical enterprise but, also, that this is dangerous in identifiable ways. Such an effort, it may appear, is inevitably reductionistic, concealing some and distorting other proper faith-learning practices. Moreover, the artificial strictures or overblown claims suggested by some proponents of integration may encourage a crass subjectivism and, finally, may prod Christians to become cynical about the very important tasks of relating faith and learning in rich and true ways.

Is there a way out? I think so. We might suppose that words like "faith" and "learning" allude to networks of concepts and related practices by which people may live their lives. These concepts and practices may cohere more or less well or poorly. They may prompt more or less successful relations to what is true, good, and beautiful. They may assist or hinder in the worship of the one, true God and our service to God and our neighbor. Hence, it is appropriate, even obligatory, to pay careful attention to these networks and relationships, with an eye for coherence, integrity, and truth. Some sets of attitudes, dispositions, and truth claims may not fit with others. Fine. Such discoveries are typical of intellectual endeavor. Interesting and demanding discussions, whose aim is deeper, richer understandings of what counts as more or less faithful Christian practices, are the ultimate aim. These aspirations need not, and probably should not, express themselves as unfilled unless articulated as an impregnable system of thought, one that has defeated all its competitors. Although our destination remains the Holy City, we limp towards Jerusalem.

LET'S, THEN, ENLARGE AND DEEPEN OUR CONVERSATION among and across various Christian and non-Christian communities. If we take "faith and learning" as a metaphor but not a theory, we may entertain systematic accounts without the notion that such efforts are the *only* faithful forms of Christian scholarship. I am with the Jacobsens in rejecting that chimera. Nonetheless, we must continue to support one another as teachers and scholars as we, of necessity, work out the various mutually enhancing ways faith and learning relate to one another, both in a community of Christian scholars and teachers, as well as in each of our lives.

While the book's stated aim of enlarging the conversation is salutary, the book does have weaknesses, in my view. Consider these two. First, the book contains some rather puzzling claims. For example, the Jacobsens observe approvingly that "scholarship ultimately is of only secondary concern to most Christians . . ." and then suggest that "[p]erhaps Christian faith should push scholarship into second place well behind the love of God and neighbor. . . ," where scholarship is rightly regarded as a kind of hobby, albeit a serious one, that has to be set aside in order to help one's friends, families, and neighbors in more concrete and immediate ways." If this assertion by the

Jacobsens were taken seriously, it would emasculate Christian colleges and universities of any reason to be in the business of higher education. Clearly, the assertion assumes a false dichotomy. Read charitably, the Jacobsens are making the point that our vocation as scholars should not be pursued as our first and only love. Granted, some (for example, Max Weber) have conceived of the academic vocation in such a single-minded way. And, as Mark Schwehn has pointed out, those of us involved in the modern academy will, no doubt, feel the pressure to accept this all-too secular notion of vocation. Resisting it and offering an alternative is one of the callings of Christian higher education. In contrast to a secular understanding of the academic vocation, Christian scholars will join Augustine in insisting that love of God should order all our other loves, and love of neighbor (family, friends, fellow citizens, and strangers) is second among our re-ordered loves.

**Y**ET, ONE IMPORTANT WAY OF LOVING BOTH GOD AND OUR neighbor is via excellent scholarship. On the one hand, we both honor God and show our gratitude by using our God-given capacities to investigate reality, by displaying our knowledge of the universe in all its complexity, by investigating and proposing various social and political ways of pursuing the good for human beings, by creating cultural and artistic artifacts that honor both the beauty and the sorrow of the world and the human condition, and by pursuing wisdom about the moral qualities befitting human beings.

In addition, as we improve what we know about nature, human nature, and the human good, we are able to improve the lives of our fellow human beings and are able to become much better stewards of our world. Much is at stake here. For example, think of the scholarly studies needed to investigate how we might better ameliorate poverty, hunger, and human disease, how non-violent methods of reconciliation and negotiation might address real life problems from Kosovo, to Israel, to Iraq, and to the Sudan, and how cooperative, rather than competitive, forms of economic development might impact third- and fourth-world development or one's vision of environmental stewardship. In short, the fundamental theological commitments of Anabaptists, for example, have important and far-reaching possibilities in a wide variety of domains. Surely, we need more Anabaptist scholars, not fewer, to challenge some of the prevailing orthodoxies in economics, domestic and foreign policy, environmental stewardship, and entertainment in the popular culture. Just as the Protestant reformers insisted that vocation is not limited to religious acts of ritual and worship, so they insisted that it is not limited to "good deeds." Yet, the suggestion that we need fewer scholars and more "good deeds" is dangerously close to the reductionism the Jacobsens rightly deplore. In my judgment, Christian communions, my own (Baptist)

included, need more Christian scholars, not fewer. And there is no reason to think that such scholars must ignore their love of neighbor in response to the vocation of scholarship.

Finally, it is easy to construct from positive comments the Jacobsens (and their fellow essayists) make about relating faith and learning an argument *for* the integration metaphor, as I discussed it above. At the very least, the integration metaphor includes the following: (1) a commitment to seeing the person as one (holistically), despite various capacities (which, ideally, are being brought into an integral harmony with one another, thus reflecting a unity-in-diversity); (2) an understanding that the various academic practices, both curricular and extra-curricular, that constitute the university aim both to reflect and to achieve this integration or unity-in-diversity or harmony; (3) a belief that faith itself is multi-faceted and includes the intellect, the affections and passions, human actions, and their consequences. Again, a harmony, or unity-in-diversity, is not only an aim but also an achievement of the educational endeavor; thus, (4) the recognition that faith and reason or faith and learning are to be mutually enhancing areas of human endeavor. In short, these are not merely complementary areas of human experience but also mutually overlapping human endeavors. Reason not only has its own relative autonomy, but also is needed to nourish faith, and vice versa.

If we think of the integration of faith and learning in this way, it is easy to see that the authors and contributors to this book are not really offering *an alternative to* integration, but rather are underscoring the need that the integration of faith and learning be instantiated in serious but multi-faceted ways in the various colleges and universities that constitute Christian higher education and that integration be self-consciously embraced by Christian scholars.

**I**NDEED, ACCORDING TO ONE OF THE HEROES OF THE BOOK, the late Earnest Boyer, former director of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the primary task of Christian scholarship "is not to defend Christian truth against secular learning but to celebrate the majesty, the integration, and wholeness of God's creation." Isolating Christian scholarship from the rest of learning or the human community would deny "the interconnectedness God has woven into the created order." But these points merely underscore the main emphasis of the integration metaphor. It presumes that faith and learning are mutually enhancing areas of investigation and exploration and that they encourage a quest for connections justified by our confidence that all truth is God's. As the Jacobsens so powerfully say, since "faith is a part of life, and the struggle to understand faith in the light of scholarship and scholarship in the light of faith is ultimately both unavoidable and potentially deeply rewarding," "... Christian scholarship is always a two-way street: faith influences learning and

learning influences faith." What could be more consistent with the integration metaphor, fairly and generously understood?

In short, I have argued that the Jacobsen's book neither shows the integration metaphor, at its best, to be susceptible to the various criticisms the book advances nor does the book provide genuine alternatives to it. Whether it is fair to criticize the book because it does not offer an alternative is unclear to me, since the authors explicitly say that they do not intend to do so (despite Crystal Downing's explicitly offering an alternative).

On the other hand, the offering of alternatives appears an essential part of the book's objective of "enlarging the conversation." More importantly, however, I contend that

their own emphases not only fit with, but also provide reasons for using the integration of faith and learning as a metaphor to explain some of the more important ideals of Christian colleges and universities. If I am right, the capacious and constructive conversation the Jacobsens and their colleagues hoped to encourage will continue in light of, rather than despite, the language of "integrating faith and learning." ♣

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## SONNET

after Jane Kenyon & Psalm 96

Let every planet follow its orbit  
Let the prevailing winds blow where they please  
across the water May the moon move seas  
in tides high on the Bay of Fundy It  
is not within our strength to make it quit  
Let every lake reflect all that it sees  
so paths of light will shimmer May the trees  
reach skyward & every flower submit  
to its own blooming May all on the earth  
cycle down paths that follow their calling  
like migratory birds' instinctive ways  
Let rain & snow submit to their falling  
& babies in the womb to their own birth  
But mostly may this all be done as praise

D. S. Martin

## lessons from the pit

Fredrick Barton

**E**VEN WHEN I GO TO THE MOVIES I AM RARELY ABLE TO SET aside my social and political concerns. And as I write this essay on film, I am worried about the increasingly bitter partisanship in Congress. I am dismayed that a Republican-Party-controlled House of Representatives is willing to change its ethics rules to shield its leader, Tom DeLay, from investigation and possible prosecution. I am offended that in his determination to court the hard “Christian” right, Republican Senate majority leader Bill Frist, a medical doctor, is willing to offer medical opinions in the Terry Schiavo case contradicting those of doctors who had actually examined her. Most notably, I am concerned that the Republican majority in the Senate, in a fierce determination to exert its will, is poised to stifle the voice of the minority by eliminating the filibuster and that Senator Frist, a presumed 2008 presidential candidate, has joined the right-wing Family Research Council in alleging that use of the filibuster is “an act against people of faith.” This last outrages me as an American, a Democrat, and a person of faith. One might not think these concerns as relevant to the films I discuss below, but they are.

### psychotic myopia

Like many Westerners, I have looked with judgmental horror at the political strategy of suicide that radical Islamists now routinely employ as a weapon of terror. In Israel and Iraq, and in America on 9/11, fanatics have killed themselves in service of a cause never entirely clear. What kind of sick madness, I have often wondered, does radical Islam foster that would lead some adherents to indulge such hatred that they would sacrifice their own lives and those of their young? But as I watched Oliver Hirschbiegel’s *Downfall*, I was reminded (as I shouldn’t have needed to be) that self-destructive violent extremism is hardly an invention of those who call God Allah. In the waning days of World War II, the Japanese produced their kamikaze, of course. Two millennia earlier, the Jewish zealots at Masada ended their lives en masse rather than surrender to the Roman legions at their gates. And in uncomfortably recent history, we in the Christian West have produced Jim Jones and, infinitely worse, the murderous, monstrous true believers of National Socialism.

The history of Nazi aggression and its attempt to exterminate the world’s Jews has been well established and addressed repeatedly in various cinematic treatments both

documentary and dramatic. We have learned that Adolf Hitler and his inner circle were even more devoted to genocide than they were to world domination. Thus, as illustrated in both James Moll’s documentary, *The Last Days*, and Istvan Szabo’s drama, *Sunshine*, Nazi troops were diverted from trying to halt the Russian advance on the eastern front and from the defense of the European coast in the weeks leading up to D-Day in order to round up Hungarian Jews for shipment to concentration camp gas chambers. As Hitler remarks about himself in *Downfall*, the infamous “Final Solution” would be his enduring legacy. But in all the chronicling of Nazi evil, less attention has been paid to the ultimately suicidal bent of its fanaticism. For Hitler himself and an astonishing number of his most devoted followers, the operative motto was a perversion of Patrick Henry’s defiant call to arms: “Give me triumph or give me death.”

Two recent films look more closely at the self-absorption of the Nazi inner circle. Hirschbiegel’s *Downfall* dramatizes events in Hitler’s underground Berlin headquarters during the last days of Der Fuhrer’s life. Andre Heller and Othmar Schmiderer’s documentary *Blind Spot—Hitler’s Secretary*, meanwhile, focuses on the experiences of Traudl Junge, a young Bavarian who took dictation and typed letters for Hitler, who lived in close proximity to him, who saw his true nature bitterly and perhaps despicably late, but who was unwilling to sacrifice her life for her boss’s glory. *Blind Spot* serves as a critical source for *Downfall*, and footage from the documentary appears in the closing minutes of the drama.

Based on books by Joachim Fest and Melissa Muller with Traudl Junge and written for the screen by Bernd Eichinger, *Downfall* was a commercial hit in its native Germany and in this country landed an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. It is the story of Adolf Hitler’s nightmarish refusal to surrender long after the slightest hope remained for victory or even a negotiated peace. Hunkering down in a bunker outfitted with fine china, crystal goblets, and a vast liquor cabinet (for his attendants—Hitler, himself, didn’t drink), surrounded by servants and sycophants, Hitler (Bruno Ganz in a brilliant performance) refuses to let his troops lay down their arms in a war that was lost on the Normandy Beaches and Russian Plains one and two years earlier. As the film opens, Berlin is surrounded, the German air force is destroyed,

and save for surviving generals and other high-ranking officers, the Nazi army now consists of old men and children. Allied air raids and Russian artillery rain death on a civilian population that is starving and seeking refuge in rubble. But Hitler orders his generals to fight on, and indicative of the national insanity that brought Hitler to power, they do so.

An unthinking viewer, I suppose, might find something heroic in the German army's willingness to stand and resist in the face of certain defeat and almost certain death. But with regard to Hitler's followers, the point of the film is that they were loyal to their Fuhrer and not to their country's people. By following Hitler's orders to refuse to surrender, they were complicit in inflicting continuing and pointless suffering on the civilian population caught in harm's way. *Downfall* illustrates that Nazism was a death cult all along. At some point in his diseased mind, Hitler may have planned merely to enslave the world's Jews, but once he could see he would not rule the world after all, he ordered the brutal deaths of six million Jewish souls. Here he declares his sneering pride in the Final Solution's program of mass murder.

**T**O THE END, HITLER SUFFERS FROM A CASE OF PSYCHOTIC myopia astonishing even today. He is the Chancellor of Germany, but the defeat of the German army, the destruction of German cities, and the deaths of millions of Germans are only indirectly among his concerns. On the one hand he is delusional, gathering his generals around him and issuing orders about attacks he has no troops to mount. He appoints a new commander for an air force that no longer exists. He promises surprise relief from secret divisions that march only in the recesses of his poisoned mind. He announces an aerial assault by one thousand jets that have been designed but never built. Like Nero fiddling while Rome burned, Hitler studies an elaborate scale model for an imaginary Berlin of the future and counsels those with him that the bombs of his enemies will simply make his grand rebuilding project easier and quicker to accomplish. For a decade he had managed to transform his will into reality, and apparently he can't understand that he can no longer do so.

On the other hand, when he acknowledges that the end of his rule is no longer measured even in weeks, but in days and hours, he rages against his cruel personal fate. He has not failed; he has been betrayed. His generals are fools and traitors; his soldiers are cowards and turncoats. Here he is at his most despicable. Told that the defense of Berlin has cost the lives of twenty thousand young officers, he retorts: "What are young men for?" He is beseeched to evacuate women and children from the war zone to the country in the scant window of safety that remains, but he refuses. Compassion is for weaklings, he declares. He will not shed one tear for innocent women and children who die in the needless last days of the war. They are getting what they deserve for failing to rise to the greatness of his leadership.

If Hitler and his vision cannot endure, then all of Germany should perish along with him. The German people should pay for their inadequacy and weakness with their blood and that of their children.

Hitler's villainous self-absorption is fueled by the idolatry of followers who do not depose him even as he leads them all to the gates of hell. Finally, the dying moves inside the bunker. Hitler's doctors dispense cyanide tablets and instructions on how to use them. Der Fuhrer doesn't want to be thought unmanly for using a pill, but is afraid he will suffer if he shoots himself. Finally, he decides to shoot himself in the two seconds of life remaining after biting the poisoned capsule. After he commits suicide, many of his followers do the same. Soldiers in the field fire pistols into their mouths or chests rather than hand them over to Russian troops. Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels (Ulrich Matthes, looking like a demon fresh from the fires of Pandemonium) and his wife Magda (Corinna Harfouch) follow Hitler into self-inflicted death, but not before Magda delivers the film's most chilling sequence.

The Goebbels have brought their entire brood of beautiful blond children into the bunker with them. Looking like poster figures for Hitler Youth, the six youngsters laugh and cavort and sing patriotic songs, evidently oblivious that the world their parents have wrought lies dying in agony in the city above their heads. Before bed one night, with the help of a Nazi doctor serving as her facilitator and assistant, Magda makes all her children take a powerful sleeping potion. Later, she returns, pries open their unconscious mouths, places the cyanide between their incisors and forces their jaws to bite down on their doom. She would rather see them dead, she says, than let them live in a world without National Socialism. Elsewhere in the death spiral, other parents do the same.

And even after Hitler's death, with the Russian enemy within gunshot, with German generals, finally freed of Der Fuhrer's orders, desperately trying to arrange a cease fire and surrender, the true believers of the SS hunt down and murder old Berliners who have avoided conscription and inevitable death to impede the Russian advance for what would have been measured in seconds. And thus we are reminded, a mad man can only rule when he can convince other mad men to do his bidding.

#### taking dication

In *Downfall* we meet Traudl Junge (Alexandria Maria Lara) when she is hired by Hitler after a typing audition in 1942. She appears in the film thereafter as a witness to activities in the bunker where she develops a kind of little sister relationship with Hitler's mistress Eva Braun (Julian Kohler), who knows the end is upon them and waxes between melancholy resignation and champagne-fueled hysteria. In the drama, Junge is neither a blind follower nor an entirely innocent bystander, and that's just the way she portrays herself in the documentary which was filmed in

2001 when Junge was eighty-one. She died of cancer a year later.

Fundamentally, Heller and Schmiderer's *Blind Spot—Hitler's Secretary* is an edited conversation with Traudl Junge who tells the story of working and living with the Nazi Fuhrer in his various headquarters, and ultimately in his Berlin bunker. The man Junge describes is polite, soft-spoken, gentle, immensely charismatic, utterly delusional, ultimately paranoid, and monstrously narcissistic. The last three of those descriptions are rendered convincingly in Hirschbiegel's *Downfall*. Junge illustrates Hitler's personality in a story about his relationship with his beloved dog, Blondi. All who surrounded Hitler knew of his pride and affection for Blondi. (In *Downfall*, Eva Braun complains that Hitler was more fond of the dog than of her.) He bragged about the tricks Blondi could perform. He kept her by his side most of the time. She even slept in his bedroom in the bunker. Then, as the Russians closed in, Hitler fed Blondi cyanide. He killed his dog, not to spare her from any of the ravages that might follow defeat, not to spare her from hunger or deprivation or disease. Rather, he had begun to suspect that the cyanide Heinrich Himmler had supplied for Hitler's own suicide might be fake. So the Fuhrer, who had already sacrificed his entire nation to his own vanity, killed his dog to make sure that his supply of suicide tablets would work when the time came.

Junge was twenty-two in 1942 when she was employed as one of Hitler's four private secretaries. She doesn't know if she was chosen because she typed and took dictation well or because she was young and pretty. She does remember with abiding shame that she was enthralled by Hitler and breathless with eagerness to work for him. She saw her job as a chance to associate with greatness. Hitler's work habits required that all of his secretaries live in his own compound and make themselves available twenty-four hours a day. Rather than labor in an office, they remained in their apartments until they were summoned to perform some task. Among their duties were to take tea with Hitler every afternoon and to dine with him at lunch and dinner. The nature of their close association might lead one to wonder about sexual obligations of the sort that other such charismatic madmen as Charles Manson, Jim Jones, and David Koresh extracted from their followers, but Junge admits to no such connections and wonders if Hitler even had much of a sexual relationship with Eva Braun. *Downfall* makes the same insinuation, and, in fact, when Hitler kisses Braun after she declares her loyalty to him, Bruno Ganz plays the scene as if he's just discovered her presence at his side.

Junge stayed with Der Fuhrer through his reversal of fortune in World War II, and all the way to his suicide. She recalls with dismay her joy when Hitler survived an assassination attempt by one of his own generals. She remembers the details of her years with Hitler with remarkable clarity and expresses her memories with unusual vividness. We gather from her comments that she spent the fifty-six years

after Hitler's death trying to come to terms with her having liked and admired a man she subsequently came to understand as one of the most evil human beings ever to have trod the earth. Junge's willingness to challenge, chastise, and examine herself is repeatedly demonstrated as she sits in front of Schmiderer's camera and submits to ten hours of Heller's interviews. Though interrogated but never prosecuted after the war by allied jurists and though a witness in four earlier documentaries, it is only in *Blind Spot* and in her posthumous memoir that the entirety of her story emerges. Heller believes that Junge finally talked publicly because she knew she was dying.

THE FILMMAKERS' STRATEGY FOR THIS DOCUMENTARY IS boldly stark. As anyone knows from watching the History Channel, voluminous archival film footage exists for showing the places and events that Junge describes. They accessed none of it. The camera always remains on Junge's face to capture the swirl of emotion she feels as she tells her story. In a strikingly novel follow-up, Heller shows Junge footage of his earlier interviews with her and encourages her to comment. She is obviously uncomfortable, pronounces herself banal, and wonders how she could ever have been so blind, so brain-washed with admiration, to have stored such recollections in her memory bank. This technique serves as a perfect metaphor for the entirety of this film and the bulk of Junge's life, looking back at herself with dismay and harsh judgment.

Traudl Junge was raised by her divorced mother under strained economic circumstances. And she's almost certainly right that Hitler was a father figure for her. But recognizing that fact about her youthful self provides her no comfort. She was not educated beyond high school, but she is obviously highly intelligent and much more articulately introspective than most people. Her eyes began finally to open during the days in the bunker when Hitler began to rage against international Jewish conspirators and the failure of the German people to be strong enough to realize his vision. But she began to see far too late, she believes, and she reveres the memory of a young woman her own age who was captured and executed for serving in the Resistance. And that girl's story is Junge's message for us about the Hitlers who may rise in our midst in the future. Whatever our circumstances, there is no excuse for not recognizing and resisting evil when we see it.

### lessons from the pit, part one

When *Blind Spot* opened in a limited number of American theaters in late 2002 and 2003, it was greeted with critical praise. Some controversy, however, has attended the release of *Downfall*, with some critics complaining that certain segments of the film portray Hitler sympathetically. These passages, almost entirely, are those that portray Hitler's interaction with Junge and other clerical and domestic underlings and stem directly from

Junge's memories, to her enduring horror, of having admired and liked her boss.

*New Republic* critic Stanley Kauffman has worried that *Downfall* portrays Hitler and his lieutenants as "consecrated idealists who believed in what they had done and were willing to pay with their lives for their actions." J. Hober took a more flip approach in her *Village Voice* review but finally dings *Downfall* as "grimly self-important and inescapably trivializing." David Denby complained in *The New Yorker* that "the achievement (if that's the right word) of *Downfall* is to insist that the monster was not invariably monstrous. But is this observation a sufficient response to what Hitler actually did?"

WITH SUCH CRITICAL RESPONSES, I RESPECTFULLY disagree. Strongly. No single film can relate the enormity of evil that Hitler and National Socialism perpetrated on the world, and this film doesn't attempt to do that and can't be faulted for failing to do it. At the same time, there's no doubt that *Downfall* does portray Hitler as a human being. He was one. Proceeding from Junge's observations, he's a man who appears to love and take delight in his dog, a powerful man who is nonetheless capable of small acts of courtesy to his subordinates. But, in short, so what? Is it sympathetic to say that a man is not a cannibal? *Downfall* tells us that Hitler was a vegetarian. Will that odd fact make him sympathetic to people who don't eat meat? I think not, for the film also shows us that Hitler was a megalomaniacal monster who attracted to his company other human beings who were less monstrous than he only because they possessed less power. National Socialism was evil, but it was not other worldly evil. It was evil imagined, campaigned for, and executed by human beings. In the half-century since Nazism was stomped into silence, other, lesser tyrants have arisen, from Pol Pot to Saddam Hussein, to practice comparable evil diminished only because more limited in scale. Thus, as long as we walk this earth, we must remain on guard, for always such evil will lurk in the shadows around us.

### Lessons from the pit, part two

Let us not forget that Adolf Hitler came to power legitimately. His Nazis were hooligans, but they were elected. And their strategy to consolidate power was first to marginalize and ultimately to silence dissent. I am assiduously not claiming that George W. Bush Republicans are fascists. But

I worry mightily over their urgent moves to emasculate their opponents and, at the same time, to hold their own leadership beyond public scrutiny. Republican President Nixon may have been guilty of illegal activities, and Democratic President Bill Clinton may have been a sexual scoundrel, but they both yielded to bi-partisan pressure and appointed special prosecutors to investigate their own governments and their own actions. It's hard to imagine the current Republican leadership doing the same.

The maintenance of power is not a good unto itself. And in free societies power must always be limited. That's why we have regular elections, in some cases term limits, and rules that protect the voices of those without power. That's why we have ethics rules. That's why we restrict the ability of the majority to impose its will on a united minority through such measures as the filibuster. Changing rules to protect minority opinions that have been in place for the whole history of our Republic is not, in and of itself, fascism, but it can facilitate the advent of fascism in a way we had best guard against. We should heed the warning that William Butler Yeats delivered to us in his great poem, "The Second Coming," about a time when "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity." I may not like the politics of George W. Bush and the Republicans who surround his administration, but he is not Hitler, and they are not Nazis. Nonetheless, I think we should all worry, as Yeats does, about some future when a charismatic spokesman for extreme positions, a person able to play upon the fears and resentments of an electoral plurality, a person fond of dogs and polite in his dealings with the Traudl Junges in his or her service, ascends to the American presidency. When that happens, we don't want to have erased the checks and set aside the balances that restrict the power of a single individual or branch of government. Ever we must imagine and protect against that which we consider unimaginable, lest we put at risk that which we hold most dear when that "rough beast, its hour come round at last/ Slouches toward Bethlehem [in our case Pennsylvania, perhaps] to be born." ♣

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## the beginning of survival

J. D. Buhl

**I**N 1971 JONI MITCHELL SANG, “ALL ROMANTICS MEET THE same fate some day /cynical and drunk and boring someone in some dark café.”

She was taking the voice of her first husband, Chuck Mitchell. And if she'd included “bitter,” he'd have described her perfectly.

Leaving a trail of exposed lovers behind her, a new Joni emerged from her late '60s work, the “manless woman, lonely, love-hungry woman, the successfully ‘dumb’ woman who is actually a man trap.” This description is from Aida Pavletich's *Rock-a-Bye, Baby* (1980), one of the first serious treatments of women in pop music. Pavletich saw what so many fans and critics refused to see, that Mitchell's affected tone of exhausted passion, of knowing, clear-eyed acquiescence, was the crowing of a Casanova, not the seeking of the reckless daughter of Don Juan she thought herself to be. She was soul-sister to Mae West, Pavletich wrote; “Her songs changed from sentimental idealist to romantic realist, with a dash of bitterness to keep from cloying.”

A different bitterness emanates from *The Beginning of Survival*, a collection of confrontational songs from Mitchell's later albums. In a *Vanity Fair* conversation with Elvis Costello (November 2004), Mitchell insists, “This is my best work, and it has not gone into the culture.” So here it is again.

*Survival* is the companion to *Dreamland*, a collection of chart singles and popular album tracks. A similar attempt to bring her “best work” into the culture was made with *Hits and Misses*, two compilations released in 1996, and still in print. With only one album of new material between them, *Survival* contains seven of the same misses, *Dreamland* nine of the same hits. (“Nothing Can Be Done” and “For the Roses,” both previously misses, have been elevated to hits). Track for track, the earlier volumes are the strongest. They surprise with their juxtapositions, a telling warmth to their mix and match approach. But the fact remains that Mitchell's work does not mix and match well. She remains an album artist. If one wishes to experience her topical work of the '80s, the way to go is *The Complete Geffen Recordings*, released in 2003.

Mitchell grew bored with her love life around the same time as her audience. But what she next offered left many listeners deeply troubled, turned-off or, worse, bored again. Uncomfortably center stage, but thankful for the

moment, she would ruthlessly root out lover's failings and her own shallowness with soul-stripping introspection, and was admired for this; stridently turning those dissecting skills on the rest of us, she was not so appreciated.

“[These songs] were introduced into a very awkward period in American culture,” she told Costello, “when people just didn't want to look at it.” The old themes remained—there was love, there was friendship, there was lost or stolen innocence. But this more political material, protest songs of a sort, had none of the verve of her high-water work. This is partly due to the production—the '80s were unkind to most pop musicians—and the leaden arrangements. Mitchell complains to Costello that the songs “had been deemed sophomoric and negative” at the time; they seem no less so now.

And in her man-trap days, Joni always walked a fine line between introversion and narcissism. Here she avoids the latter only by displaying empathy with those crushed beneath the passionless play of the privileged. The many young women who grew up listening to her records, finding there justifications for flight and fancy, may never have developed such fellow feeling. For them, as for Mitchell herself, the search for romantic love was no longer paramount; it was the inevitable loss—or abandonment—of it that had become the prize.

**G**OING AFTER THE RICH AND POWERFUL THEN WOULD seem a natural move after all those years of love addiction. Finally free, happily married (at least for a while), with time on her hands, Mitchell turned her artist's eye to the world coming in on television broadcasts, magazine pages, radio waves and newsprint; she stopped obsessively producing aural self-portraits and made sound paintings about the mess we find ourselves in and the rich and powerful who keep us there. From Native Americans to the environment to televangelists to the phantoms of advertising, she found her causes and targets and splashed her words across sonic canvases that grew progressively more sleek, more taunting.

She was angry then, rightfully so. But anger only occasionally makes for great albums. Between them, the four Geffen releases and her two most recent on Reprise supply enough good songs that one good album could be assembled, and *Survival* attempts that.

She was also right. The degradation, isolation, and exploitation to which these songs speak have become so entrenched that it might surprise some listeners to hear that we were warned. There is reason to re-experience these songs, but they do not become great just because she keeps pointing at them. In fact, such limp screeds as "Sex Kills" and the hopeless sound collage "The Reoccurring Dream" will never sound good, no matter how many times they are anthologized.

Mitchell fails in the same way as her brothers Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. The five of them enjoy—and deserve—reputations as social justice and peace activists, prophetic voices in the values-neutral world of pop music. But with occasional exceptions (usually involving Crosby), when these convictions are set to song, the results are awkward at best, often preachy and punchy at worst. The selections on *Survival* fall roughly into two types—the denunciatory and the narrative. Nowhere do we get the riskier "music as news" of Young's "Ohio" (straight out of the folk tradition they all share), or even the giggly social commentary of Mitchell's own "Big Yellow Taxi." Instead these songs either say, "That's bad," or tell us a story about what is bad. It is this latter type that has held up best over time.

"The Beat of Black Wings" recounts Joni's encounter with Killer Kyle, a universal soldier who knows "the old pick wars, we die in 'em." With what sounds like the refrain from "Johnny Angel" in the background and horrible, shimmering sheets of synthesizer, the young man's haunted, hateful aftermath is made memorable. "The Magdalene Laundries" and "Passion Play" both use first person narrators, an unnamed twenty-seven-year-old in the first, who says she's been sent to the sisters "for the way men looked at me," and Zachius, the wee little tax collector in the second. These two sinners, real and supposed, become our guides through the world Christianity built.

Ironically, this singer Robert Christgau once dubbed "The Poet of the Me Decade" was trying to lead us away from the intense focus on self that she had popularized and

made art. Her audience, except the most politicized, had their own love lives to pay attention to and resented her changing from the chick with the guitar to the professor at the chalkboard. But the problem now is not that Joni left her folkie recriminations for larger subjects. It's that her bitterness with the music industry has made her dishonest. Not only has she misplaced her emphasis, she has become expert at one of the industry's favorite games: reissue, repackaging, and rewrite history. With CSNY and other of her contemporaries—Lou Reed, for instance, Paul Simon certainly—the weight of regurgitated material is staggering. Who can accommodate all those box-sets, live albums, anthologies, and collections? Can't fans be allowed to make up their own minds which songs are hits and which are misses?

**I**N NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND, DOSTOEVSKY'S mouse-hole dweller observes, "again and again, we see our romantics turn out to be such shady dealers, displaying such a grasp of reality and such practical agility, that . . . the public can only stand by clicking their tongues and gaping at them in surprise." Does Mitchell really want to be remembered for these songs? I don't know. What is clear is her ongoing interest in making her past our present. From *Hits and Misses* to the orchestral re-interpretations of *Travelogue* to the *Geffen Recordings* to *Dreamland* and *Survival*, fans are being hit over the head with Mitchell's need to control her artistic legacy. In the *Vanity Fair* interview, Mitchell and Costello laugh over their being invited to contribute to a movie soundtrack. "I can write one kind of song and one kind of song only, right now," Joni told the producer, "I hate show business." I wonder. For years she kept saying she was going to retire and concentrate on painting. Perhaps she finally has. But it seems she wants her retirement to be as unpleasant for us as it is uncomfortable for her. ♣

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# spot:light on science

## hope in the balance

*Martin Erhardt*

I STILL REMEMBER, AT THE CEREMONY AT WHICH I WAS named a Doctor of Philosophy, the chancellor telling us that the university was equipping students with the skills that would be required for life in a world where technology was ubiquitous, and where scientific literacy was increasingly important for maintaining economic competitiveness and improving quality of life in our society. We graduates were from a variety of academic fields, not just the natural sciences, and I had mixed feelings about this culminating admonition to the graduates. I appreciated the affirmation that knowledge of the physical universe is valuable. I was concerned that some of my colleagues might start thinking that economic competitiveness was the measure of quality of life. And at the time I was curious about what scientific literacy really was.

As a faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences at a "university under the cross," I am still uncertain about scientific literacy, but now, at least to some extent, I actually have to act on what understanding I have on behalf of my students. As a university under the cross, however, we have not been left entirely alone to resolve this quandary. We may lack specific divine instruction about how best to structure science education as part of a university education, but we know enough of our Master to take our steps in humble confidence, walking by faith despite and because of the cataracts through which we see as through a glass, darkly. In faith, hope, and love, we attempt to proclaim the truth while acknowledging our finitude.

I have several fundamental hopes for my students. One is that in their university years, they will develop a fuller, more accurate picture of the world that they inhabit; colloquially, that they will get a better idea of what's out there. Secondly, I hope that they will develop a better idea of what could be out there—of how things could be made better by human effort. And finally, I hope that they will gain a sense of how they themselves can contribute best to bringing *what is* closer to *what should be*. Some might consider these hopes utopian, but I think that they are more like a sincere response to Jesus' parable of the talents and the pounds than the cynics may be prepared to acknowledge. Giving myself the benefit of the doubt, I'd like to imagine what general education, and specifically general education in and about the natural sciences, might look like within this framework of hope.

Members of a Christian university should understand

the institution's identity as a body acting within, or at least partially within, the body of Christ. That is a good model for students. I often tell my advisees, with apologies to Hugh of St. Victor, not to try to learn everything. As members of a body, we were made for dependence, and attempting to ingest the entire academic smorgasbord will only land one in the intellectual vomitorium, a place that Christians committed to good stewardship of their gifts ought sedulously to avoid. At the same time, interdependent members of a body should make the effort to become somewhat self-reliant, both to equip themselves for everyday generosity and so as not to become an undue burden on their neighbors. Therefore, the decision of how much coursework in and about the natural sciences to require of students as part of a balanced academic diet is based on a hopeful tension between encouraging passion for the particular and guaranteeing basic nourishment with morsels of knowledge that are too precious to miss, even if force-fed. I have no formula for this, though I tend to err on the side of freedom, believing that force-feeding can spoil both the taste and nutritional benefit of even the most delectable and edifying cheese and chutney sandwich.

THAT SAID, REQUIRED COURSEWORK FOR THOSE STUDYING the natural sciences, professionally or not, needs first to honor and to draw on the identity of a university under the cross, as does coursework in other fields. Therefore, course content ought to be crafted to foster an appreciation for the vastness and intricacy of the created order. Such study is justified not merely by the student's own curiosity, but also by creation's intrinsic worth as a gift of God, a gift worthy of exploration. With this understanding, scientific work then becomes a way of loving God by opening and exploring His gift. Furthermore, by using what we learn to develop technology for the material benefit of others, scientific work can be an act of love for our neighbor. Francis Bacon termed the intellectual and technological purposes of science "luciferous" and "fructiferous," respectively, the one in which ignorance is put to flight by the light of knowledge, and the other in which material fruit is borne in the form of technological improvement of tools, toys, and works of art.

Introducing science through the people who perform(ed) it is one of the most effective ways to help students learn to care about exploring creation through

scientific inquiry. Science is, after all, a human endeavor, and the purposes of science are in fact personal—they are the purposes of those persons who commission or practice it. The divorce of scientific theory and practice from the lives of the scientists who use and develop them is a continuing source of intellectual poverty among science students today. The most that we can expect from a good general chemistry textbook is coverage of Boyle's Law in a small biographical box consisting of a portrait of Robert Boyle, an identification of the time during which he lived, and perhaps a caption saying "Robt. Boyle: an Englishman with an inordinate fondness for pressurized airs." This is not to say that such texts should become biographical works, but the fact that the human context of science is often considered to be superfluous to the education of budding scientists is obviously problematic if we expect them to see scientific work as significant, in need of moral direction, and worthy of their personal investment. Furthermore, approaching science through the lives of its practitioners in historical context exposes students to the development of the natural sciences as disciplines, and provides valuable insight into how what we now think of as "scientific" issues relate to other areas of inquiry. Boyle, for instance, regarded his investigation of nature by empirical methods to be an act of religious devotion, a philosophical response to scholasticism, and a means through which to obtain theological understanding.

**S**TUDENTS LEARNING ABOUT THE NATURAL SCIENCES NEED to be introduced to the basic methodology of scientific inquiry, including how to design an experiment to test a hypothesis and how to design a hypothesis worth testing. Scientists have limited resources of time, energy, and funding, and need to prioritize their tasks based on criteria with metaphysical roots. It follows, therefore, that students of science should also be made aware of the difference between the practice of scientific inquiry and naturalist, positivist, or empiricist epistemologies which leave no room for knowledge not empirically obtained. Knowing the presuppositions, limits, and benefits of scientific inquiry is an essential part of educating the scientist and the

non-scientist alike.

It goes without saying that general education in the natural sciences should include some kind of physical description of the world as well as an introduction to the tools by which the world is observed. Priorities will differ here, ranging from discussing ideas of mass, energy, and elementary forces, to observing molecular behavior in chemical reactions, to performing genetic manipulation through plant breeding. The universe is a big place, and there is a lot going on. As with university-wide general education requirements, a balance of hope must be sought, while maintaining respect for freedom and for mystery.

Finally, students of natural science benefit from considering how they might use what they've learned. Coming full circle, we've talked primarily about "what's out there," which often bears the label "worldview." What about vocation—the role of the student in using their newly acquired gift of knowledge to make the world closer to how we'd like it to look for Christ's return? In most cases, the answer will be primarily luciferous: the goodness of living with an illuminated appreciation of the natural world—a good too often unnoticed or undervalued in the absence of this kind of reflection.

I have no prescription for how these tasks could be shared best among departments and the faculty members who comprise them. I would venture to say that there is more here to be done than would conveniently fit into a semester-long three hour class. Furthermore, the experience of laboratory work in which the matter of creation is handled, probed, and wondered about can effectively incarnate lecture content for students. This, of course, makes further demands on students and faculty alike. Despite the inherent difficulties, however, I hope that the basic framework proposed here for general education in and about the natural sciences will help those of us at colleges and universities under the cross (and those of us under the cross at colleges and universities that don't share our commitment) more faithfully to live out our vocations as members of the larger body of Christ. ✚

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# pulpit and pew

## dope slaps will set you free: an inquiry into truth

*Thomas C. Willadsen*

I'M NOT NAÏVE ENOUGH TO THINK THAT PARISHIONERS ARE uncritical of the clergy, but one of my greater frustrations is how reluctant parishioners are to share critical comments. (Admittedly, I pastor a church in the "nice" Midwest; perhaps things are different elsewhere.) People expect clergy to be overly sensitive to criticism, so we do not hear much of it. Sometimes we are blind-sided by people who have long-standing grievances that they have been reluctant to share lest our feelings be hurt. To these people I say, "Tell me the truth; I can handle it."

This has not always been the case. Earlier in my career, even the most innocuous comments felt like criticism. Criticism itself could be crushing. Now, with fifteen years of experience in ministry and more than six years tending the same congregation, the truth really will set me free. That is, it would, if people would share it with me!

A few years ago we remodeled the entryway to our building. We removed a wheelchair lift that was no longer necessary because we had added an elevator. We reoriented the church office and changed the color scheme of the hallway that leads to the preschool. A committee met to decide what colors the carpet, wall coverings, and trim should be. Everyone agreed that our choices had been aesthetically pleasing. Shortly after the carpet was installed, however, a long-standing member of the church commented to me that the carpet had been a bad choice; she called it "a catastrophe."

"What's wrong with it?" I asked.

"Well, it's a light, solid color and we have twenty preschoolers walking over it five days a week with snowy boots. It's going to show dirt from Day One. And it's not a high-traffic pile, it would be fine in your living room, but we're going to have to replace it in two years."

"Sandy, I was on the committee that picked the carpet."

"Oh! It's lovely!" she responded.

And it was lovely, and the color scheme would have worked in my living room. But Sandy was right; the carpet was a bad choice for that spot. Luckily, after about six months of the new carpet our custodian dropped a bottle of bleach on it and we were able to use insurance money to cover most of the cost of replacing the carpet with a sturdier weave that hides stains better.

In my six years here I can count on one hand the people who have disagreed with me about a sermon I have preached. I am certain that more people have disagreed

with my sermons, but only five people have come to me and initiated conversations about what I had said in the pulpit. One of them has a marvelous ability to point out contradictions without making me feel defensive. He can also disagree without being disagreeable. I have found that I seek his reactions to sermons. He truly can speak the truth in love to me in ways that have helped me grow as a preacher.

Another of the five left the church because, among other things, I do *not* get my news from Fox and I believe that our state is wrong in seeking to exclude un-married couples from privileges similar to those that married people enjoy by "the ink stains that have dried upon some line." When I realize that I've preached more than three hundred sermons here and have driven only one person away, I realize how timid and vague my sermons have been. Perhaps if I told the truth more openly, if I spoke as bluntly as Jesus did, I would drive more people away. And the truth would make us all free. At least the truth would set me free from those who disagree with me!

Still, I know that the truth is powerful and, like a weapon, must be respected and handled with great care. I learned this lesson first hand from Brother Brown.

Brother Brown was the custodian/handyman of a non-profit organization I interned with in Chicago twenty years ago. In the midst of his daily chores around the office, Brother Brown shared his wisdom with one and all. Once, while emptying my waste basket, Brother Brown observed, "They say, 'The truth will make you free.' Brother Brown says, 'The truth, at the wrong time, will mess you up!'" (Brother Brown originally used an earthier verb than "mess," but you get the idea.)

I have often reflected on Brother Brown's quote, especially in counseling sessions, when I desperately want to scream, "Wake up and smell the cat food, knothed!" and realize that the truth, at the wrong time, will simply destroy a psyche, rather than bringing healing and insight.

Emily Dickinson made the same point as Brother Brown, when she said, "Truth must dazzle gradually, or every man be blind." Still, when I need a quote about truth's power, I go with Brother Brown.

Last year I discovered a veritable fountain of refreshing truth in my community. I needed to meet someone for breakfast midway between Oshkosh and Appleton. A colleague suggested *Sassy Sal's* in Neenah. Sassy Sal has been slingin' hash for more than thirty years. Sassy Sal

takes exactly no crap from anyone.

After my first visit, I said, "Sassy Sal hates me."

"No, no, Tom, not just you, Sassy Sal hates all men."

I felt a little better. But it was only the fact that Sassy Sal makes the best sausage omelet in the Fox Valley that assured a return visit. [If I do not eat pork sausage at least once a month I get a rash . . . right . . . here.]

After becoming a regular, and hearing about the hardship caused by Neenah's smoking ban and the pain of running a diner on two knees without cartilage, Sal and I had developed a relationship built on trust and I was ready to be "dope-slapped."

Fans of *Car Talk* on public radio know that dope slaps are Tom and Ray's disciplinary tactic of choice when spouses are driving a great distance together. Dope slaps are administered by the passenger to the back of the driver's skull by the palm of the hand. A well-placed and timed dope slap enables the lucky recipient to see the truth with great clarity. Sal is a true black belt of the art of dope-slapping.

One morning, an hour after I'd finished my omelet, Sal asked if she could take the ketchup bottle to another table.

"Sure, Sal, I gotta cut down. I'm driving anyway."

SMACK.

"You had that comin' and you know it."

"Yes, Sal."

When she brought the check I said what I have said

about every restaurant check I have received since 1986, "This is an outrage! She won't pay!"

SMACK.

I said, "You know Sal, I think these dope slaps are doing me some g . . ."

SMACK.

And I was enlightened. Now, I must say, I prefer the Zen enlightenment that goes like this, "Have you finished your rice?"

"Yes, master."

"Then wash your bowl." At this moment the novice achieved enlightenment.

Zen enlightenment does not put my glasses out of shape, nor rearrange my fillings. Unfortunately, dope slaps are the only mode Sal uses to dish out enlightenment. And for days at a time, they are the only media that reveal this truth to me: My smart comments are not always appreciated.

My parishioners will not tell me that. My sons do not understand them and my wife has given up on me. Even members of my Rotary Club are much too nice and accommodating to me. Only Sal with her whip-like right hand reveals the truth to me.

And sets me free. ♣

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## NORWEGIAN PANCAKES

They are best in quiet morning,  
eaten on the screened porch with the tang  
of berries sweet and sour to the taste.  
Seeds of grace and sorrow there.  
The brunt of knowledge clips my tongue  
as summer, leaving, keeps me in her thrall.  
Over the back pasture fence green bitter  
walnuts drop in idle showers,  
and in still sultry gardens, midday,  
tomatoes ripen on the tangled vine.  
The brilliant squash flowers burn toward fall.

Warming my plate, brown-edged and heavy  
with the season's last red fruit, this is all  
that I could savour, this is all.

Diane G. Scholl

## the Chinese (Christian) century?

*Brent Whitefield*

ANYONE WHO VISITS CHINA AND TREADS THE FAMILIAR tourist circuit comes away impressed by the ambition of the builders of the system of great walls. The walls are a centerpiece of Chinese pride for the sheer scale of the accomplishment, determination, and sacrifice they represent. But they also symbolize the paranoia of China's rulers over two millennia, desperate to keep the barbarian hordes at bay. Imperial China was characterized by an attitude of cultural superiority. Yet this superior culture was always susceptible to challenge or even destruction from without, requiring vigilance and strenuous effort to minimize the threat to the Chinese way of life. Whether or not the Chinese ever believed that the defensive walls would really keep the wild northerners in their place, the walls did serve an important totemic and psychological function. They stood as a visible reminder that the tribes that reside beyond are foreign, strange, uncivilized, and to be feared. Indeed, one could argue that the walls were more for internal reinforcement of China's cultural superiority than they were a viable defensive military tactic.

How does one contend with an enemy that has already breached the walls? Such an enemy exists today in the form of a Christianity that challenges the Communist Party line of materialist atheism. Christianity has existed in China for nearly 1400 years; yet this matters little because this fact is not taught, and so it remains largely unknown. Rather, typically the church is believed to be a recent Western imperialist imposition. After coming to power in 1949, the Communist Party recognized early on that Christianity could not be eliminated by force and has clung tenaciously—but increasingly pessimistically—to the belief that the opiate of the masses will die away in a socialist utopia. The strategy has been to marginalize Christianity by emphasizing and highlighting its foreignness. Through the instrumentality of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the officially licensed Protestant church consortium, the government has, since 1951, supported an entity which has all of the trappings of the Western church *circa* 1930, from the architecture of the buildings to the size and shape of the offering plates; a church which conveniently has the outward appearance of an imperialist institution. If the majority of Chinese regard the church as a foreign institution, the job of containing the growth of the church is rendered that much easier.

The growth of Christianity in China has occurred

primarily in the underground church context. The unregistered 'house' church bears little resemblance in appearance and style of worship to its Western counterpart. Yet the government has intermittently but brutally persecuted this body of Christians. From the standpoint of preserving China's commitment to atheism as the state dogma, the government's strategy is sound. To allow a Sinicized church to prosper is to risk its wider acceptance as an institution of and for the Chinese people.

LITTLE IN DAVID AIKMAN'S RECENT BOOK, *JESUS IN Beijing*, will allay the worst fears of the Chinese authorities concerning the growth of Christianity and the depth of involvement of foreigners in the sustenance and vision of the house church movement in the Middle Kingdom. Aikman catalogues many of the historical and ongoing evangelistic efforts of Chinese and Westerners alike to grow the church in China. What he foresees and welcomes is not a Christian re-colonization of China, but the development of a partnership between Christians in the West and China, with the Chinese taking the initiative in certain areas, particularly pioneer evangelism. He also sees considerable scope for further warming of relations between a Christian America and a Christianizing China. His claim that "China is in the process of becoming Christianized" is wishful thinking, but does reflect the truth that Chinese intellectuals are carving out for the faith, particularly the ethics of Christianity, a place in China's religious and philosophical plausibility structure.

Aikman's book has provoked considerable controversy on both sides of the Pacific by naming names and making heroes of some figures who would no doubt prefer to remain in the shadows. There is little question that the authorities are aware of the activities of Chinese and foreign evangelists in China. However, Aikman's exposing to a popular audience the activities of foreign missionaries, all of whom carry tourist or work visas, nearly compels the Chinese government to do something about the situation. The burden of the crackdowns that may have been caused (or at least intensified) by Aikman's work will fall not on the foreign evangelists, but on the Chinese house church leadership. He may have concluded that the time was right for public exposure of Christianity's advances in China, but the decision to "out" vulnerable church leaders was almost

certainly not his to make.

If the book threatens the safety and livelihood of Christian leaders, it is no less threatening to the Chinese government itself. Aikman notes that the vast majority of evangelical Christians in China are “pro-American” and would support closer ties with the U.S. on a variety of fronts. This could excite suspicion, already present here and there, that conservative Chinese Christians represent a seditious, pro-democracy fifth column, thus inviting even closer scrutiny and restraint. More threatening than the prospect of a closer alliance with American foreign policy imperatives, however, is the exposure to a wide audience of spurious claims of religious liberty frequently asserted by Chinese authorities and often accepted at face value by those seeking to remove obstacles to closer Sino-Western cooperation. The Chinese government can use all of the good press it can get on the subject of religious liberty, and Aikman’s much-publicized work does not help.

The potential for the growth of the Chinese church, both in numbers and influence, is enormous, particularly if urgently needed efforts at the unification of Chinese Christians are undertaken. This unity is necessary on two fronts: First of all, TSPM and house church believers must be willing to lay aside decades of mutual suspicion and competition. There are already signs that this is happening. In some parts of China with a large Christian population, the lines between the house and TSPM churches are beginning to blur. In the process, genuine differences in theology and practice should not be ignored, but neither should they represent insuperable barriers to cooperation and common cause.

**A** SECOND IMPORTANT FRONT FOR UNIFICATION AND communication lies between the largely rural evangelical church and urban Christian intellectuals. In the vacuum left by the nearly universal disillusionment with and abandonment of Marxist-Leninist-Maoism there is ample room for the Christian message. A growing body of thinkers and scholars, Christians and sympathetic non-believers, are working hard to claim and maintain this space for Christianity. Though their numbers are relatively few, they have made significant contributions to Chinese thinking about Christianity. Many Chinese are convinced, for example, that Christianity is one of the secrets to the economic and political success of the West, while the theory that Christianity played a key role in bringing down the Iron Curtain has attained the standing of a truism. Christianity, these scholars argue, simply delivers the goods in terms of political and economic prosperity and should be taken seriously and studied, if only selectively, by a country looking to reform itself on several fronts.

Yet the gulf between these urban, less publicly devout intellectuals and rural, zealous house church Christians is considerable. While the intellectuals mine history and ethics to see what Christianity can do for China, Chinese house church evangelicals are far more interested in what China can do for Christianity. House church evangelicals are not content to see the Gospel spread throughout China, but have concocted ambitious plans for foreign missionary endeavor, with special emphasis on unreached (read Muslim) nations. These plans call for nothing short of the re-conquest of Jerusalem for the faith through the recruitment, training, equipping, and dispatch of 100,000 Chinese missionaries. This “Back to Jerusalem” movement will be a Chinese affair in nearly every way, and may represent a unique Chinese contribution to missiology. These Chinese missionaries will resurrect the idea of the faith mission, going out without support and trusting in God for continual and miraculous supply—an idea championed by the nineteenth-century British missionary to China, Hudson Taylor. More importantly, they will eschew the establishment of bricks and mortar churches and instead replicate the house church model that has served them so well under persecution. These Chinese Christians believe that they possess certain advantages over Western missionaries, including greater access to sensitive areas, experience with and connections to large Muslim populations in their own country and, most tellingly, poverty. There is a widespread belief that the wealth of Western Christians has made them more reliant on monetary solutions to problems and less willing to take risks for the advance of the Gospel. Chinese missionary mobilizers believe that the poverty of house church Christians makes them more willing to go forth, unencumbered by worldly concerns, and more reliant on God for their supply.

There is little communication now between the theorists and the practitioners, the scholars and the missionaries, who seem at times to be working at cross-purposes. The ultimate prosperity of Christianity in China is contingent on many factors, including the vicissitudes of politics and economics, the activity of high profile cult groups, and the intervention of foreign interests. However, no factor is more likely to redound to the success of Christianity in, and emanating from, China than a genuine unity and cooperation between the missionary and the scholar. They need each other, and together they can accomplish much for China and for Christianity. How ironic it would be if Christianity, which China spent much of the twentieth century trying to keep out, becomes a signature Chinese cultural export in the twenty-first century. †

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# life together

## centers that hold

Eric Miller

TWENTY YEARS AGO, IN AN AGE OF ARGYLE KNEE SOCKS and skinny ties, of spikey mullets and tidy perms—a time, in other words, when college students were trying to figure out how to be hip without being hippies—a boy I know went off to college. Sting and *Thriller* filled the air, *Cosby* and MTV the screen. And the genial pep of Ronald Reagan, contagious in its way, was already making the poor guy the Democrats sent up into a sacrificial lamb, though the election was still two months away.

All of this was the stuff of mystery to this boy, the fledgling collegian. He had been overseas for several years, and had just returned home that summer. John Travolta, flowers, and transistor radios had given way to Boy George, plaid, and boom-boxes. All this was unsettling, in an exciting sort of way, and the young man was eager to jump in. And he was scared to jump in.

How does one safely enter something as powerful and vast as a *culture*? From the protection of the family room? Maybe behind the wheel of a car? On the curb of a city street, perhaps?

But this way of putting it makes it sound abstract. There was *nothing* abstract about re-entering America for this young man. Not only was he trying to find his way in a country only strangely familiar, he was, by leaving the safety of home, and of childhood itself, putting himself on the line. It was a reality show without the show, with no national audience observing and no hefty paycheck awaiting; just the boy in his cramped dorm room, attempting, as they say, to “adjust”—you know, trying, while his hick Elvis-impersonating roommate is belting out off-color Conway Twitty songs, to figure out if N-I-K-E is pronounced *NIKE* or *NIK-EE*.

The boy had jumped, and he was in. But he wasn't in the family room (until fall break, when, to his mother's consternation, on his first night home he slept for more than eighteen hours). He wasn't behind the wheel of a car, since he didn't have his license yet (he was only seventeen, and eighteen was the legal driving age in the country where he had been living). And he certainly wasn't on a street curb. No, he was at a small Christian college in a semi-suburban, still largely rural, part of southeastern Pennsylvania, living on something called a “campus.” This was his primary entry point into that bewildering, indeed ominous-sounding world of America, 1984.

Fortunately for him, this college was a familiar place: it was his dad's alma mater—if not the mother of his father's

soul, then certainly its governess. His father had attended the college while the boy was in elementary school and had been a presence on campus. *Everyone* knew the boy's dad, it seemed, and many of them even remembered the boy. Father and son shared many professors; it seemed both impossible and completely natural that such legendary figures as Dr. Figart and Mr. Osborn, his father's mentors, were now his teachers too. He was playing on the same soccer field upon which ten years earlier he had watched the amazing Jude Nixon perform magic with ball and net. This was, in short, a safe place, and a beloved place—just the sort of place that he, at this delicate and critical moment of re-entry, needed.

But, unfortunately, the college was struggling, and struggling at many levels. Enrollments had been low for several years. Salaries had always been low. Professors were worn down and out from years of overwork. And the cafeteria food was bad—well, bad by today's standards, at least.

MORE DEEPLY, THIS COLLEGE WAS STRUGGLING TO MAP a course for itself in that world of 1984—a world that was not just bewildering to freshmen, but to the grown-ups, too. Having come into being fifty years earlier in response to what its founders had perceived to be serious, even tragic, wrong-turns that other colleges and seminaries—and indeed, the entire culture—had taken in the first decades of the twentieth century, it intended to provide re-orientation and direction for Christians seeking to live faithfully in a troubled time. It was a noble aim.

But it's one thing to set out to be a college; it's another to actually achieve it. To attain to the reality of *college* is no simple task, after all; in the least, to truly be a college requires that the educational community in question possess both social integrity—people living together as humans should—and intellectual integrity—people thinking together as humans should. By taking upon itself the holy responsibility of instructing humans in living and thinking, a college community publicly obligates itself to enact those high ideals for which it stands in all aspects of its life: from the way it structures its pay-scale to the way it structures its classrooms; from the attention it gives to its students to the attention it gives to its food preparation. If it fails at discerning the nature of the good life or at practicing this understanding, it will not possess integrity and will look ridiculous—and, indeed, be deserving of ridicule. The

social and intellectual spheres must come together to form one philosophical, ethical, aesthetic whole—this is what the ideal of *college* means, and teaches—and if the community in question actually comes to embody the most central and elemental human ideals, college is achieved: the name fits.

As you might suspect, the particular college community the boy found himself in was filled with earnest, smart people striving to achieve this highly demanding ideal. But their confusion and disorientation were palpable, even to freshmen: confusion about what it meant to live as a Christian; confusion about what it meant to live as an American *and* as a Christian; confusion about the ideas emanating from the broader academy; confusion about the direction in which the world was moving; and confusion about its own vocation within the Church and the world. Both its social and its intellectual integrity, in short, were under threat. It was struggling to overcome a profound if elusive sense of disorientation. And in this, it was not alone.

**B**ECAUSE AS IT TURNS OUT, THIS SORT OF PERVASIVE AND fundamental confusion about who humans are and how we should live was, arguably, the defining quality of the entire twentieth century, a quality whose erasing hold marks our own day—and perhaps our own college—as well. *What Are People For?* is the title of one book I've assigned in classes, and the very need to ask that question aloud gives some sense of the dimensions of the cultural and political crisis that frames our everyday life. Older understandings of humans, and history, and time, and God, have in the past two hundred years been cast aside, with no small amounts of relief and conceit. But the century that those living one hundred years ago expected to deliver us to the Promised Land, to the New Jerusalem, and beyond, turned out mainly to leave all who survived it asking fearfully, confusedly, this one enormous question: *What are we, after all, for?* In the aftermath of a century that featured political brutality of cataclysmic proportions, that saw what was perhaps the most culturally, intellectually, and economically sophisticated nation in the West seek to destroy the Jewish people, that has seen a gaudy and transient form of wealth triumph only at outrageous cost to the earth and its creatures, we cry out, with tears bitter and hot, *What are people for? What is our purpose? Is there anything worth fighting for? What is worth living for?*

Our disoriented college freshman, attending this disoriented little college, found himself looking for answers to these questions as they emerged inchoately from his soul and worked their way into his mind. He found some professors who had serious ideas about the shape of the present. He found others who were more concerned to preserve a sense of the world that was passing. In this second category was Dr. Joan Tompkins, a great and passionate student of English literature, the advisor of the drama club that he joined, and one of the college's most

infectious, demanding, and fiercely wholehearted teachers. One fall he enrolled in her Major English Writers course and was promptly saddled with a massive tome. In time he discovered that *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Great Authors Edition* contained many searching, learned meditations on all of these questions regarding the nature of the civilization, and the age, and the even more fundamental matter of human identity. One took the form of a poem that begins like this:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

This poem, William Butler Yeats' "The Second Coming," written in the darkening years that followed World War I, stands among the most famous of the thousands of attempts to capture in concentrated form the nature of our times. *Things fall apart; the center cannot hold . . . Things fall apart; the center cannot hold . . . Things fall apart; the center cannot hold . . .* This one line has become so embedded in our souls over these eighty years because it reflects both the reality of our deeply fallen creaturely estate and of our current civilizational circumstance. A brief glance backward reminds us, again, that we have not always regarded our situation in such a dire fashion. In the eyes of our nineteenth-century forebears, the center was not just holding, but was growing ever more strong as the deity of Progress, with dazzling pillars of fire and cloud, led the nations forward. Things were falling together, not apart; triumphally—if not always merrily—we went along.

But then things changed. The shock of discovering that history might actually have been moving in a quite unbelievably different direction, palpable in Yeats' poem, registered vividly in the mind of the great American social critic Lewis Mumford, who years later put it this way:

We all had a sense that we were on the verge of translation into a new world, a quite magical translation, in which the best hopes of the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution would all be simultaneously fulfilled. The First World War battered and shattered those hopes, but it took years before the messages received through our eyes or felt at our fingers' ends were effectively conveyed to our brains and could be decoded: for long those ominous messages simply did not make sense. Until well into the 1930s we could always see the bright side of the darkest cloud. We did not, while the spirit of our confident years worked in us, guess that the sun upon which we counted might soon be in eclipse.

Little that has happened since World War I—whether the terrifying things like global depression, Hiroshima, and the Cold War, or the dazzling things, like television, smart bombs, and the World Wide Web—has strengthened the center to which Yeats referred; quite the opposite, in fact. Those traditions that had helped to construct that center—including varying forms of Christian belief and practice—had lost their shaping power, and the search was on to fill the vacuum they left. By the mid-twentieth century the West was in the final stages of the long and slow process of shifting for whatever cohesion it still required to another center, to what we might call, simply, a *self-center*: not a polity founded upon a broad (if unstable) consensus about a *deity* who creates and commands, but instead a polity devoted, most fundamentally, to a *self* that deserves and demands.

Put differently, we—Americans, and others in the West—have chosen, or perhaps defaulted to, not one transcendent center but rather to millions of human centers, each self a law unto his-or-her-self. Once our old binding agent lost its hold, we fell apart. And fallen apart we remain.

**W**E HAVE TENDED, IN A HOPEFUL BUT FUZZY WAY, TO call our new estate “freedom.” And indeed, in the course of this long-coming fracturing we have, true to the odd and eminently unpredictable way in which history moves, made political and cultural gains that have led to an enlarged sphere of true freedom. With our heightened perception of the self have come various movements and laws that have won vital protections and liberties for those who had been systematically marginalized and oppressed due to gender, race, or ethnicity.

But, paradoxically, at least in part these gains have been made possible by this vast cultural and social fragmentation, and the bonds that we-the-liberated have grasped hold of to tie our little self-centers together are not so impressive. Usually when we-the-liberated wish to feel a sense of belonging to some person or group we end up looking for the code and symbols of those who are part of our own self-selected, generation-driven market niche and follow distantly along, being sure to reserve the right to leave (whether a job, church, town, or marriage) at a moment’s notice, and so protect our “freedom.” Sadly, this form of belonging is a faint shadow of the sort of thick membership that words like “commonwealth” and “neighborhood” and “family” and “tribe” and “church” and “college” describe and demand. Our more shallow way of connecting cannot, and does not, hold. Inevitably, we, disconnected and distant, find ourselves looking inside again to face once more that lonely, looming question: What am I *for*? Just “good times”? “Fun”? “Pleasure”?

“Work”? “Success”? “Me”?

We’re not just disoriented—we’re barren. We don’t know to whom or to what we belong, or to whom or to what we should belong. In Aristotle’s useful way of framing it, we know neither our *formal* end nor our *final* end. We awaken and find that we have jumped into a culture moving at breakneck speed, powered by great economic forces dedicated to expanding and servicing the appetites of the voraciously hungry selves we’ve become, and we eat and eat and eat and we’re just as hungry as before, so we eat and eat and eat . . . and we’re still empty. Still hungry. Still alone. And we realize that we have become, as we see in flashes of dark honesty, tiny centers, the tiniest centers imaginable. And these tiny centers *are not holding*.

Like our bewildered collegian of two decades past, we need help. We need safe places, beloved places, vital places, places whose integrity teaches us who we are and how we, in these strange times, should live—and, perhaps most crucially, how we can become a “*we*.”

And so one day we, like that freshman, find ourselves sitting in an academic convocation at the start of a new year. And against all odds, a moment of insight occurs: perhaps colleges like this one might actually exist for this one thing: not to train students for “careers;” not to provide fun, or “culture,” or even an improved vocabulary; but, rather, to help us, postmodern pilgrims that we are, to gain the rooting—spiritual, intellectual, moral—that we with every fiber of our souls long for, and that might aid the transformation of the lonely and hollow selves we’ve become into the robust and rich people God has called us out of darkness to be.

And what of the old “Christian” West? Maybe it was time for it to go. Like a college, a civilization that fails to incarnate the ideals it has championed deserves, if not ridicule, at least a stern rebuke and a sober exit. Maybe instead of fighting so hard to preserve a dying civilization, we should allow the most noble ideals of our Western heritage to call into existence a new people, one that more faithfully adheres to that ancient, timeless vision of the good life, a people that will begin this time with a markedly improved awareness of the worth of each particular creature of God, and, indeed, of the inestimable worth of the entire creation.

Perhaps this people’s intense and passionate conviction will call multitudes back to their Maker, as ceremonies of innocence, and justice, and peace forge new centers: centers that hold. ♣

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## public education, federalism, and democracy

JoEllen Lind

IN THE CLASSICAL ERA, ARISTOTLE COUNTED EDUCATION OF the citizenry as too important to be left in private hands and since then the connection between education and political legitimacy has been apparent to most who have thought about democracy and education. *Brown v. the Board of Education*, the historic decision that ended racial segregation in schools, made the connections between democratic legitimacy and public education explicit:

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of ... governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today, it is the principle instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education.

Nonetheless, fifty years after the appearance of *Brown*, in some ways, public schools are worse off than before. In the contemporary era, Bill Gates delivers a jeremiad on the ability of future generations to compete, given the inadequate training in math and science students receive. The very name of national legislation, "No Child Left Behind," concedes that children are left behind in the existing system. More affluent parents, who used to purchase a quality education by the expedient of buying a home in a good neighborhood, after Columbine no longer feel as secure in that option. Numerous urban school districts, such as Chicago's, are still under federal court order to achieve compliance with *Brown*—decades later—and many of these districts are more segregated now than they were before. In debates over racial equality and urban education, the plight of poor, rural children is not even on the radar screen.

Given these phenomena, it is not surprising that Americans rank education as one of their highest political priorities. But few realize that as a matter of federal constitutional law, there is *no* fundamental right to a public education. How, then, can President Bush seek to be the "education president," when from the perspective of

constitutional law, this is an oxymoron? This paradox comes from a confluence of factors, mainly structural and decisional. The structural piece of the puzzle stems from the American brand of constitutionalism known as federalism; the decisional aspect arises from the United States Supreme Court's refusal to recognize a right to education more than a generation ago in a pivotal opinion, *San Antonio Ind. School Dist. v. Rodriguez*, (1973).

Under the structural blueprint of the American Constitution, only specific enumerated powers were originally ceded to the federal government; plenary powers were reserved to the states (U.S. Const. Art. I, § 8). This is the concept of "our federalism." The primary exception to this was the Bill of Rights, which comprised a group of rights that originally could be enforced against the new national government, and then after the Civil War, became enforceable against the states due to the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment. Under this scheme, responsibility for the garden variety of everyday legal relations, things such as making a contract, selling a piece of property, or getting a divorce, were matters of state law and states' rights, unless one could constitutionalize the issue by posing the legal question in terms of fundamental rights protected by the Fourteenth amendment or, eventually, a violation of equal protection, also protected by that amendment.

Originally, education was not of particular national concern, as there was virtually no publically funded education in the Colonies and people could prosper through apprenticeships and the like. Whether and how to create a general school system was something that came later with westward expansion, evolving organically from the founding of towns and counties. It fell, therefore, into the plenary powers of states, reserved to them under the Constitution. Being a matter of local concern and support, the funding source for America's first public schools arose, some might say naturally, from local property tax revenues. But, extreme localism in public education, both in authority and funding, also allowed school systems to reflect local distinctions in race and class, so that the educational opportunity available to an American child depended first on race, and second on socio-economic status. Geography and racial pedigree were destiny in American public education and the ideal of local control took on a bad odor when seen in the context of these reali-

ties. It was not until the system of racial apartheid in public education was challenged in *Brown* that the idea of unfettered local control became vulnerable, as well. But, the logical extension of *Brown's* reasoning was foreclosed by *Rodriguez*. To understand the stance of *Rodriguez*, one must understand the doctrinal limitations of *Brown* itself.

The issue before the Court in *Brown* was not whether states had an affirmative duty to provide an education to their citizens that could be federally enforced—they did not—it was a more modest one, namely whether when a state has chosen to provide the entitlement of education, that provision must take place on equal racial terms. *Rodriguez* involved a challenge to San Antonio's system of public school finance on equal protection grounds, and was mounted by poor, minority children living in the urban sectors of the city. Their core argument was that the scheme by which Texas forced local districts to fund schools unfairly burdened children in areas with low property tax revenues and exacerbated the *de facto* effects of past *de jure* racial discrimination. They attempted to show that the comparative inequality of the resources made available to them deprived them of educational opportunity. In a 5/4 opinion written by Justice Powell, the Court insulated the Texas scheme against attack, expressly declaring that, among other things, education is not a fundamental federal right.

THE *RODRIGUEZ* MAJORITY GAVE A VARIETY OF REASONS for refusing to intervene in state education. Not surprisingly, federalism played a central role. From Justice Powell's perspective, public schooling is a matter of uniquely local concern and is heavily intertwined with the taxation policies of the states. The possible consequences for state autonomy of a federal right to education were, to say the least, worrisome. The apparent impact of the *Rodriguez* decision was twofold: at the theoretical level, it permitted states to maintain plans for public school funding with a disparate impact on various sectors of their populace, thus continuing barriers to educational opportunity by allowing a system of economic discrimination to replace a system of state racial discrimination; at the practical level, it focused the political fight over school finance reform on *state* constitutions, legislatures, and courts where in many jurisdictions the fight has stalled in political impasse.

In addition to these specific effects, *Rodriguez* should have reduced or limited federal intervention in state education policy, but it did not. Federalism has not, in fact, prevented the national government from attempting to influence the states through its spending power, rather than its direct regulatory power. The federal government has come to shape education by passing a variety of legislative enactments using the technique of the spending power and categorical aid to promote its views—this is the basis for “No Child Left Behind.” But, under current constitutional

anomalies, it gives financial resources to states for education conditioned on local performance on nationalized test standards while fundamental local economic inequalities in school funding and school attendance are left intact. Perhaps most tellingly, and as James E. Ryan and Michael Heise pointed out in their *Yale Law Journal* article, “The Political Economy of School Choice,” virtually all choice programs such as vouchers and charter schools still retain historic geographic restrictions in place, as does “No Child Left Behind.” Even now, it is generally not possible for a poor, inner city school child to spend her voucher to gain entry to an elite suburban public school or to achieve a transfer to such a public school if her inner city school fails national standards. Apparently we are willing to talk the game of improved public education, but we are not really willing to share on an equal basis the educational resources to be divided, or to have our children attend schools with those of different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Why is this so? Because the constitutional framework still reserves to the middle and upper classes—of whatever race—the exit option of fleeing lesser performing public school districts by buying a home in a different locale or sending their children to private school.

It is difficult not to indulge in questions of what might have been had the Court decided the other way in 1973. This is especially poignant as we seek to export democracy to other parts of the world, even as we pay little attention to the impediments to the necessary conditions of real democracy here at home. In its ideal incarnation, democracy is about inclusion, and the commitment to inclusion as a structural feature of the political system itself. In an ideally democratic system, every adult subject to its authority has an equal right to participate in the creation of its official values, official institutions, and official practices. A public space is a thing in itself, over and above mere social space, and its unique mark is the right of individuals to move within it, and to constitute it, in their roles as citizens.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY should provide a public space, one committed through both symbol and practice, to democratic values. While public education may not be as closely connected with representative democracy as voting, it shares voting's basic characteristics in that we could not replace it with a system of private education without significant cost to our democratic ideals. It is unfortunate that a public desperate for a fix to public education may seize upon privatization without realizing the missed opportunity that confronted the United States Supreme Court at the cusp of the civil rights movement. Perhaps before jettisoning public education as a uniquely public responsibility, we ought to revisit the question of whether education should be an entitlement protected by the federal constitution, as is free speech and voting. ♣

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# vocation

## twenty questions

I'm a police officer, and when I'm not at work, I sometimes find myself out among people. Here I speak of wedding receptions, theme parties, and coffee circles. Often, when those in attendance find out what I do for a living, they ask piercing questions. Here are some of the most common questions and my answers to them.

### 1. Have you ever had to fire your gun at anyone?

I am asked this all the time, sometimes even before I've taken off my coat (or flak jacket, in the case of some coffee circles). I have mixed feelings about this question. I certainly understand the curiosity factor, but the question itself has always struck me as, at best, indelicate. If I have fired my gun, it probably occurred in a situation where someone was badly hurt, or even killed, and why would I want to discuss such a solemn event with someone I barely know? "Sure, I shot a guy through the throat once. Now how about passing that shrimp plate?" I've had some close calls, but the answer, for the record, is no, which is kind of nice, because I didn't take this job to put bullets in people.

### 2. I often see cops pull up next to each other in their squads, sometimes in the middle of traffic. Is that just to chat? What are they talking about?

I'd like to say we're discussing criminal procedure, or exchanging information about the dope house down the street or the fearsome new street gang. And sometimes we are. But often the conversation wanders towards where to go for dinner, or when bowling league starts, or what's the name of that leggy new girl in Property Crimes. We don't have a water cooler, you see, so that's how we roll.

### 3. What is the scariest experience you've had on the job?

I was called to an assignment where a mentally ill man off of his medication tried to end his own life by using what is known as "suicide by cop." His method consisted of hurling a carving knife at me from about fifteen feet away and then stalking towards me with a second knife in his hand and a homicidal gleam in his eyes. We both ended up surviving that encounter relatively unscathed, although when I look back and ask how, I don't chalk it up to either lack of will on his part or any specialized training or skill on mine, but rather to pure, dumb luck. The whole ordeal lasted about forty seconds, and it was scary as hell.

### A.P. 4. Why don't police shoot to disable instead of to kill? Why, for instance, don't cops just shoot the guns out of people's hands?

Police are trained to shoot only when someone (the officer or a citizen) is in imminent, life-threatening danger. If this is the case, we are trained to shoot in order to stop that imminent threat. The quickest way to do this is to aim for what is called the upper hydraulics of the body, i.e., the lungs, heart, and chest. If you dance around, wasting valuable seconds trying to trick-shoot a knife or a gun out of someone's hands like you're Annie Oakley, you and/or the person you're trying to protect are going to die.

### 5. Do cops really kick in doors all the time? How many doors have you kicked in?

Maybe half a dozen, and three of them in one month. And each time, my surgically repaired lower back lets me know about it for the next few days. For this reason, I'm not as enthusiastic about booting in doors as I once was. Now I tend to look around for some younger officer who seeks a little street credibility so I can pawn the task off on him. Or I call the fire department. They have sacks of tools with which to punch through doors, and they're more than happy to use them. Firefighters don't even have to write any reports after they break stuff.

### 6. Do cops eat a lot of donuts?

Yes. People eat a lot of donuts. Cops are people. Therefore, cops eat a lot of donuts. I'm pretty sure that follows, though it's been a while since Logic 140. I think one reason cops eat a lot of donuts is because they think they're supposed to; that's what they've heard cops do. It's a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

### 7. How many cops are corrupt?

If you're talking about the weighty stuff like police shaking down dealers for dope and cash, taking payoffs, or planting evidence, my guess is a very small percentage. Obviously there's no way to be sure, but I personally haven't observed anything like this, although I know it happens (L.A.'s *Rampart* scandal for one). Responsible and discerning police departments aggressively pursue these officers for criminal charges and termination because there is no greater stain on a department and no quicker way to lose the public's trust than to have cops who have gone to

seed on the payroll. It probably seems like there is a higher percentage of corrupt officers than there actually is because you frequently read about them on the front page of the newspaper. I'm not knocking the media; it's their job to report these things and it certainly is news people are interested in. And I don't know that cops are singled out in this way any more than are high school teachers who sleep with their students or ethically shaky C.E.O.'s. But while you'll always read about the cop who went bad, the cop who goes to work every day and does her job and treats people decently and tries to make things better rather than worse, that officer will never see the headlines. And that's the majority of us.

#### 8. Has this job changed you? If so, how?

It has. Probably in some ways that I don't always recognize. But I do know that I'm more cynical now than when I began work as a policeman. I'm less likely to give people the benefit of the doubt. I'm quicker to go hands on to prevent a situation from deteriorating into violence. My language is a little saltier because that's the language I'm constantly around, which reminds me of a passage from Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* where a character notes that "in a room full of 'ain'ts,' he couldn't get an 'isn't' out of his mouth."

I have more aches and pains now. When I drive places off-duty, I am ever looking for guys with felony warrants or people breaking into cars, because it's hard to turn it off when you leave work.

I also, after often seeing people and situations at their chaotic worst, have a better sense of what's important in this life. I have a better grasp of people's pain. I am more familiar with the progressive, burn-the-house-to-its-foundation problem of drug addiction. All of this combines to make me more thankful for my family, who raised me in an environment where I was both disciplined and loved, and to know that I have been given a good life, a good life that I did not earn and cannot repay.

#### 9. Do you listen to music while you patrol?

No, except when my partner breaks into one of those old Frank Sinatra tunes—typically, "My Way"—and if you could hear my partner you would know that in those cases it isn't clear that we're really talking about music. Our squads are only equipped with police radios. Some folks bring their own portable radios in, particularly when the big game is on. But this is against department policy. It's a fair policy, I think. Commercial radio is distracting. There's nothing more embarrassing than driving right past an armed robbery in progress because you're jamming to Jay-Z and Linkin Park's newest collaboration on K-101.

#### 10. What is a realistic cop TV show?

I don't know that there are too many realistic cop shows. Maybe I just don't watch enough television. *Law &*

*Order*, maybe? Actual police work does not usually lend itself to a scintillating hour of entertainment. There's too much sitting around at crime scenes, writing reports, making phone calls, going to the bathroom, following up on leads that go nowhere ("negative results" is the police buzz word), and thinking about donuts. We are not as attractive, or interesting, or dynamic, as our TV counterparts. Our one-liners aren't as clever. Our hairlines are higher. But I posed this question to a learned friend of mine not long ago and he noted that Arthur Miller had once said that drama is always a compressing of time. You have to make a lot of things happen in a short period. You leave the boring stuff out because everything has to be heightened, for the story's sake and to keep the audience engaged. So if some of these cop shows aren't the most realistic, maybe that's just the way narrative works.

11. How the devil is it that such a rakish, debonair, well-versed Renaissance Man such as yourself, with your classical training, startling command of French wines, and grace on the dance floor, is a street cop? Shouldn't you be some kind of sultan, or international delegate or, at the very least, Under Secretary of Commerce?

Okay, actually, I've never been asked that.

12. Why do you write your columns under the initials A.P. instead of using your actual name and the name of your department?

There is a section in my department's rulebook that forbids speaking or writing publicly about the department, while acting as a representative of that department, without prior approval from upper administration. So if I wanted to name names, such as my own and my department's, I'd have to run each column by a police supervisor for approval, and then to *The Cresset* editor for approval round two. I don't wish to do this. One editor is enough. I do feel that by not naming myself or my department I am well within the spirit of this police policy. So I remain cloaked in obscurity. Which I like. I can still go to the supermarket without being mobbed by *Cresset*-crazed teenage girls demanding my autograph and trying to tear off a lock of my hair as a keepsake.

Furthermore, for what it's worth, I've noticed that although the editor of *The Cresset* has known me for almost fifteen years, he still can't get my name right.

13. What is a typical patrol day like for you?

There's no such animal. There's no way to know what the day will bring. I could be dispatched to a homicide scene straight out of roll call, or spend an hour trying to corral a pair of stray German shepherds running in traffic, or maybe be sent to the hospital to guard a felony prisoner (which is not so bad, because at the hospital one often encounters free sandwiches and juice and nurses who laugh at one's jokes).

**14. Do you carry a truth lasso like Wonder Woman?**

No.

**15. What is the most frustrating thing about police work?**

Domestic violence-related calls stand out here. I'm talking, for instance, about the man and woman with mutual restraining orders against each other who get back together for one sweaty, alcohol-fueled night. Then the next morning, when all the old problems that initially broke them apart resurface with a vengeance, each calls the police and demands that the other be arrested for violating that restraining order. Or the husband who throws his wife down the stairs in front of their children. Or the son who breaks his elderly father's nose with his fist because he won't give him money for drugs. And then, as is often the case, the victim doesn't show up in court because the victim and suspect have reconciled, or the victim is scared, so the suspect walks free and then you get called to the same house soon afterwards for the same problem. A circle of too-familiar violence that never seems to close. And you know you did the right thing in making the initial arrest, and you know that domestic violence is complicated and it's easier said than done to leave an abuser and start a new life. But you can't help but wonder, what's the point?

**16. How do you deal with this frustration?**

Everyone deals with it a little differently. Some cops fish. Some work on their cars. I hit the heavy bag every week. Police need something to address the frustration, because if you don't, the frustration turns to anger and the anger turns to rage. Sometimes this rage is pretty raw and sometimes it has more of a self-righteous quality to it because as a police officer, you almost feel entitled to it. But the bottom line is that raging cops aren't good for anyone. I've felt this rage before. All cops have. But I've never taken a cheap shot at somebody, never used more than what I considered to be the minimum amount of force necessary to control a situation. And that's why I hit the heavy bag—to keep things that way. When you lose control on the

street, you can lose everything, starting with your job and ending with your self-respect.

**17. You've been a cop for almost four years. What's the worst thing you've seen?**

*The Ice Capades.*

**18. Did you always know you wanted to be a cop?**

When I was younger, I wanted to be a social worker. Maybe I am one now—just a heavily armed social worker, in a car with lights, who occasionally has to throw people against walls.

**19. What does it feel like to be sprayed with pepper spray?**

I can answer this with conviction, because I've been soused with it on more than one occasion, both in training and also on the street by other officers with erratic aim. The effects of pepper spray vary. Some people can shake it off, like a bee sting. For others, particularly those fair-skinned among us, it is as though rivulets of barbed wire have wrapped themselves tightly around your corneas in a fiery embrace and all the devils of hell have crawled under your skin and are cackling at your ill-fortune. (Okay, I happen to be one of the fair-skinned folks). You cough. You sweat. You burn. You can kiss your contact lenses goodbye. Water doesn't provide much relief; indeed, it just helps to spread the pepper spray around more. And all the snot you've ever had, or currently have, or ever will have, streams down the front of your shirt like a thick crystalline sheet of molten lava. Basically, you enter a world you do not wish to know.

**20. Are you happy with your job?**

Despite the occasional encounter with pepper spray, I like it. I like it immensely. I feel like I'm doing exactly what I should be doing. Besides maybe my team making a splash in the Final Four, this is the greatest feeling I have known. ♣

*A.P. works and writes in a Midwestern city.*

# things catholic

## being dependent

**I**N *AUGUSTINE AND MODERNITY*, MICHAEL HANBY TRACES IN painstaking detail the way in which Descartes's "modern self," though sometimes thought to be a natural development of the Augustinian tradition, actually deforms and distorts it. That is because Descartes has a "*Deus* without *Trinitas*"—which is to say, he has no "God-man" to mediate between time and eternity, creature and Creator. This loss, Hanby writes, "is always accompanied by the substitution of another figure: the Man-God." Now, "the individual will—distinct and separated from the love of beauty, the longing for God, or the praise of Christ—becomes a will to power."

In the Triune God whom Christians worship, none of the three "persons" is ever alone, ever a monad, ever quite an individual in the way we (heirs of Descartes) tend to think of individuals. From eternity the Father begets the Son, from eternity the Son offers begotten life back to begetting life—all through the bond of love, which is the Spirit. Hence, heaven—where the redeemed are drawn into the endless giving and receiving that is God's triune life—is pictured as a city, a body, or, even, a choir.

Our selfhood and our individuality must, therefore, always be found in relation to God and to others. We can never be independent—except, of course, in hell. This is a lesson that goes down very hard with us, however, and the will to power asserts and reasserts itself in our lives. It can do this in large and massive ways—as it did in mid-twentieth-century. It can do it in smaller, less obvious ways, which only come to public attention on rare occasions.

Not long ago there was such an occasion: Media attention was focused on the case of Terry Schiavo, a severely disabled woman whose tube feedings were withdrawn so that she would die. The decision to withdraw the feeding tube was a grave injustice, but here I focus on one aspect of the aftermath to the Schiavo case.

**F**ROM MANY DIFFERENT QUARTERS THE ADVICE WENT OUT: get a living will. Don't let yourself get caught in such circumstances, with your wishes unknown or uncertain. Exercise your autonomy and declare your wishes in advance—lest someone else, and not you, should one day be master of your fate.

As if any of us ought ever think of ourselves as exercising such mastery. As if autonomy of that sort were desirable, rather than a deformation of true individuality and true community.

## Gilbert Meilaender

The notion of a living will has always been philosophically baffling, attempting, as it does, to assert our continued autonomy even in a stage of life when we are no longer autonomous. It is puzzling because it aims to abstract from the living body's personal history a moment—a kind of timeless moment—which is the true and masterful self. A moment in life to which all prior development leads and from which all future development is decline. That, of course, is the Cartesian moment, the modern self that is thought of as divorced from our biological nature and the body's history. This self exists entirely apart from relationship, and it need never be dependent—on a body, on others, on God. And that, truth to tell, is the lure of autonomy.

**S**TILL, IF THIS NOTION, HOWEVER ALLURING, IS PHILOSOPHICALLY incoherent—and if, even more important, its craving for independence and mastery is a metaphysical illusion—it should not surprise us that it has not worked well in practice. People cannot predict their own future preferences accurately; they cannot articulate precisely what they want; proxies are often unable to interpret a patient's wishes accurately; and it is very hard to know when to invoke the living will's provisions. (For example, on the day before death, the median prognosis for patients with heart failure is still a 50 percent chance to live six more months.) As the empirical evidence of its failure has mounted, continuing to recommend living wills is, as Angela Fagerlin and Carl Schneider have written, "the triumph of dogma over inquiry and hope over experience."

These empirical problems might, as I noted, have been predicted. But they are only a symptom of the deeper problem. It is that lure of autonomy and mastery—of being in control of one's living and dying, of finding a self (a hidden monad, even if it is not, as Descartes hypothesized, connected to the pineal gland) that can stand outside the flow of history and the body's inevitable withering and decline—that is our problem. We do not want to be dependent—to hand ourselves over into the care of others. We want to be in control even when we are no longer in control. In a world for which every problem is finally an engineering problem, we want to engineer even our death.

Yet, of course, to be dependent on no one—that is hell. As Iris Murdoch once put it, "Kant's man [offspring of Descartes's] had already received a glorious incarnation nearly a century earlier in the work of Milton: his proper

name is Lucifer.”

Unless we want to be dependent, to share in the kind of giving and receiving that is the leitmotif of God’s triune life, we cannot be saved—saved from our isolated independence, from our illusory will to mastery, from (as C. S. Lewis wrote) “that ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling concentration upon self that is the mark of hell.” Or, as the *Athanasian Creed*, that most practical of dogmatic utterances, puts it:

“This is the catholic faith: We worship one God in trinity and the Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the divine being. . . . Whoever wants to be saved should think thus about the Trinity.” †

Gilbert Meilaender *teaches theology and ethics at Valparaiso University.*

## CONVERSION ON HEARING PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

FOR HARRY GERDY

After the light mute as dust and flat,  
after the colors’ crisp disappearing entirely,  
after the smother of warmed and rewarmed air,  
the panic for breath,  
after the thickening fatigue of arms, legs,  
seeping to each finger’s web  
and each root of hair,  
after all this and after the surgeon  
carves your vessels like clay,  
after he holds the heft of your heart  
in his delicate fingers,  
the needles’ stitch his finest embroidery,

You awaken to sunlight  
making its bright tracks through slit blinds,  
and somewhere the bassoons and oboes  
of Mussorgsky, the glockenspiel and flute,  
the complexity of lines with the movement  
of light, the sunlight both steady  
and moving with shadows,

And you are certain God has flared out  
like the sheen of lacquer on a silk-wrapped box,  
like the sweep and arc of wing,  
like the glisten on a wind-stirred pond.

Jill Peláez Baumgaertner

## the peril and promise of dual citizenship

Jeanne Heffernan

A COMMON THEME IN CHRISTIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT from Augustine to Luther to Niebuhr is the theme of dual citizenship. Christians are in *statu viatoris*, pilgrims on their way to the heavenly city, their true homeland; yet, though on pilgrimage, they are also members of earthly cities to which they are duty-bound in various ways. Depending upon the political theology in question, one will emphasize either the relative harmony or conflict between these allegiances. But whatever the emphasis, be it sanguine or skeptical, thoughtful Christian reflection on politics has always recognized the complexity of dual citizenship.

Even for thinkers with a high view of politics, such as Aquinas and Calvin, the political order poses a potential threat to the most basic Christian commitment—the worship of the true God. In its most explicit form, this threat takes the shape of an idolatrous command in the face of which Christians must defy the law, risking even death. For we Americans the perils posed by our double allegiance are rarely so dramatic. The republic prides itself on religious toleration; a blatantly idolatrous order would violate the founding principles of the regime (and would surely fail of majority support). Yet, there is reason to wonder whether the political culture of our day doesn't present a more subtle but nevertheless real danger to our primary allegiance. Beyond the obviously corrosive effects of capitalist excess and moral license, there is a deeper force that requires careful scrutiny in proportion to the influence it exercises on the minds and mores of Americans: the democratic ethos itself.

Tocqueville noted long ago that democratic equality coupled with free-markets proved a potent solvent within which long-standing European traditions dissolved. The Americans repealed primogeniture and entail early on, destroying the basis of aristocracy and spurring dramatic social and economic mobility. While we regarded this as a signature triumph—having destroyed rigid feudal structures, men could rise as far as talent and ingenuity took them—Tocqueville perceived a less wholesome effect. Without strong ties to place, class, and family name, Americans were becoming an ahistorical people, forgetful of the past, heedless of the future. Commenting on our preoccupation with the present, he reflected that “the woof of time is every instant broken [here] and the track of generations effaced. Those who went before are soon forgotten; of those who will come after, no one has any idea: the

interest of the man is confined to those in close propinquity to himself.” And the parameters of such propinquity, he further observed, naturally shrink over time, ending in the individualism that was for Tocqueville the congenital weakness of democratic society.

The centrifugal effects of this dynamic registered not only in the social and economic spheres, but also in the intellectual. Democratic equality fostered a certain habit of mind. “The nearer the people are drawn to the common level of an equal and similar condition,” Tocqueville noted, “the less prone does each man become to place implicit faith in a certain man or certain class of men. But his readiness to believe the multitude increases, and opinion is more than ever mistress of the world.” Underscoring the double-edged character of the egalitarian ethos, he cautioned that the very equality that “renders [the American] independent of each of his fellow citizens, taken severally, exposes him alone and unprotected to the influence of the greater number.”

What was true in 1831 remains so. The American mind jealously guards its freedom from traditional authorities, yet reflexively defers to majority opinion; it is, at once, independent and submissive. The same soil produced Thomas Paine and George Gallup, after all, and not accidentally. A hearty resistance to received ideas coupled with an easy acquiescence to current opinion seems a hallmark of our disposition. The question is whether it is compatible with the tradition of Christian discipleship.

In his new book, *Democracy and Tradition*, Jeffrey Stout celebrates one side of this composite and argues that it is compatible with religious traditions—conceived (or reconceived) in a particular way. Appealing to such figures as Whitman, Emerson, and Dewey, Stout praises the independence, even iconoclasm, of the American spirit, which displays a “principled scorn for unquestioning acquiescence in authority of any kind.” Schooled in a democratic milieu, so the argument goes, Americans rightly consider all authoritative claims defeasible; they reserve the right to demand reasons for such claims and to reject them if unsatisfied. This disposition informs and is informed by the discursive mode of modern democracy.

That such a mode marks genuine progress in the political order is unquestionable for Stout. Yet its value is not simply political; ultimately, he finds American pragmatism's democratic re-conception of authority applicable to most other social phenomena, including religion. Here

Stout endorses what he terms “self-reliant piety.” Unlike earlier (and, for him, clearly inferior) religious dispositions, the preferred posture of “self-reliant democratic individuals” is independent, not deferential. Having appropriated once-priestly tasks, ordinary men and women can now determine for themselves what the ultimate ground of their existence is, which beings are worthy of worship, and of what kind. “Self-reliant piety,” in short, insists “that it is our own responsibility to imagine the sources on which we depend and to fashion lives worthy of our best imaginings.” Piety has come of age; it has become democratic.

**B**UT IS IT STILL AUTHENTICALLY CHRISTIAN? IT ISN'T, AS Stout's brief but revealing treatment of Catholicism indicates. Noting with approval that Whitman's prediction—“There will soon be no more priests”—has largely come true, Stout suggests that while the office of Catholic priest remains, it has lost its authoritative status. Priests remain “important” to the life of the parish, but “their parishioners no longer defer the imaginative work of piety to them.” Both pastor and congregation know this; it is only a reactionary Vatican, according to Stout, that opposes it, but its resistance is unavailing, since “[t]he feudal patterns of deference to ecclesial authority will not soon return.”

If Stout simply meant to reject the twin distortions of clericalism and lay passivity, that would be one thing, but he seems to mean quite another. What Stout quickly dismisses as an anachronism is arguably at the heart of Catholic ecclesiology. As Yves Congar explained last century in *The Meaning of Tradition*, “the hierarchy, following the apostles, have received the mandate, authority, and corresponding power to keep the apostolic deposit and Gospel, and to explain them authentically.” From a Catholic perspective, this distinctive commission can only be understood adequately with the eyes of faith, since the prerogatives of the magisterium reflect a particular grace attached to the teaching office. But constrained by political and sociological categories, Stout is blind to the theological substance behind ecclesial authority and reduces it crudely to power relations; hence his praise of those Catholics “openly fighting” to democratize the church.

Given Stout's reductive standard for judging religious traditions, it is important to see that his critique applies to more than Catholicism. Irrespective of church polity, any Christian body that recognizes scripture, the ecumenical councils, classical Christian ethics, and other sources as authoritative will ultimately run afoul of what he considers the discursive demands of the democratic ethos. Why?

Because ultimately for Stout the “self-reliant democratic individual” is sovereign.

This is a genuine threat to our primary allegiance. In fact it is a more dangerous threat than an idolatrous law, for it trades on an assumption that lies deep in our political consciousness and will find an easy resonance with Stout's audience: the most important matters are subjects for popular deliberation. With scarcely any acknowledgment that political and theological matters differ in kind, Stout applies the *modus operandi* of democratic politics to the church. Beyond doctrinal formulation by plebiscite, the logic of Stout's argument leads to an even more radical conclusion. With tradition divested of its proper weight, the individual is given final discretion to determine who God is and what is his due. As Stout forthrightly proposes, “In cultivating their own piety, citizens will take sustenance from whatever traditional stories, exemplary lives, communal structures, poetic images, and critical arguments prove valuable. It is up to them to make something of their inheritance and to discard those of its parts that insult the soul.” The basic individualism of Stout's account is unmistakable: the evaluation of the tradition is done by each of us, “employing one's own standards of worth.”

But such a mode is incompatible with Christian discipleship, for the life of a disciple is at its heart communal and receptive. We receive God's definitive self-disclosure in Christ socially, beginning with the authoritative witness of the apostles. We are participants in, not the architects of, salvation history. Our holy books and our sacred rites have been given to us, not constructed by us. And every element of the tradition we have received leads us into a realm of mystery that transcends discursive rationality. It is with respect to these fundamental things that the distinction between the church and the polis is clearest—and most needful.

If the individualism that Tocqueville identified threatens our ability to live as self-governing citizens, it needs to be guarded against; democratic politics is an important enterprise. But it is, in the end, a contingent arrangement for achieving limited goods. If the same individualism, under the benign guise of democratic citizenship, is allowed to shape our understanding of and disposition toward the Christian tradition, the stakes are altogether higher. We risk a profound misunderstanding of what Stout himself has aptly called “the sources of [our] existence and progress through life.” †

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# books

Duane Litfin. *Conceiving the Christian College*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.

As the President of Wheaton College, Duane Litfin sits atop evangelical higher education in the United States. His is the institution that once nurtured the thought and convictions of Billy Graham. It has shaped alumnus Dennis Hastert, the current Speaker of the House. It has helped form the mind of President Bush's leading speech writer, Michael Gerson, once a theology student. Arguably America's leading religious historian, Mark Noll, teaches at Wheaton and he has thoughtful colleagues aplenty to keep him company. To take stock of this single Midwestern school, in other words, is to reckon with American evangelicalism itself and its far-flung cultural and political potency. A book by Wheaton's sitting president on "the Christian college" is, then, most welcome, if for no other reason than that it provides a window into the intellectual issues and theological debates that currently shape, inform, and regularly roil evangelical higher education.

As a faculty member at a sister evangelical college, it would serve my vanity well were I able to write off Litfin as an intellectual light-weight. The book's substance, not to mention Litfin's multiple doctoral degrees, does not allow this. While Litfin recognizes that present-day exigencies make it difficult for a president to serve as a college's intellectual leader, the book offers substantive intellectual leadership. It's not a book that

dwells on issues arising from what we assume occupies a college president's time these days: fund-raising calls, ceremonial appearances, engagement with alumni groups, and the like. The book is rather about ideas, in particular theological ideas, or what we might call a theology of education.

For those who've closely followed discussions about church-related colleges and Christian scholarship over the past few decades, one will find little wholly original in Litfin's analyses. But originality is not Litfin's point. In fact, he's worried that the desire for novelty, compounded by external pressures for change, has led Christian educators away from the tried-and-true to the dubiously fashionable. His own thoughts "are efforts to state again what must be stated again—and again, and again. They constitute an attempt to think through some age-old responses to our contemporary challenges."

Litfin has done his homework, seriously engaging a wide variety of contemporary thinkers on faith-based learning, especially George Marsden, Mark Schwehn, Richard Hughes, D. G. Hart, Robert Benne, Mark Noll, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Nathan Hatch, and Arthur Holmes. (Litfin is particularly fond of Holmes, an emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Wheaton.) Along with numerous Scriptural references, Litfin also draws deeply—and ecumenically—from the Christian intellectual tradition, quoting Augustine in one passage, John Henry Newman in another.

Interestingly, many figures that have defined mainstream evangelicalism—the brothers Wesley, Charles

Finney, Billy Graham, Francis Schaeffer, Charles Colson, James Dobson, to name a few—make scant or no appearance. This itself is a revealing point, but it is perhaps churlish to belabor this since much of evangelicalism's academic firepower in recent years has been obtained by eliding certain evangelical hallmarks (relentless efforts to render the faith "relevant," revivalist preaching, political activism, dispensationalist theology, and speculative prophecy) and engaging in selective borrowing—'massive pillaging' might be the more appropriate term—from traditions that have historically placed more value on the *vita contemplativa*. The neo-Calvinism of Abraham Kuyper and the high-church Anglicanism of figures such as T. S. Eliot, C. S. Lewis, and Dorothy Sayers remain among evangelicalism's main academic lenders at present, although Catholicism is playing an increasingly influential role, especially modern Catholic social thought, the Thomistic natural law tradition, the "virtue ethics" espoused by philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre, as well as the inspiration of Catholic authors with broader appeal such as G. K. Chesterton, Walker Percy, and Flannery O'Connor.

But this brings us to the rub. Few, if any of the above figures, were they alive today, could get a job at Wheaton College because of its faith statement, which all faculty sign upon teaching and renew each year when they turn in their contract. The current statement (dating from 1926; revised in 1978 and again in 1994), might be described as broadly Reformation-Protestant

with lingering overtures to fundamentalist positions articulated in the “fundamentalist-modernist” controversies of the early-twentieth century.

The question of whether such a statement serves a college with the intellectual aspirations of Wheaton has quietly gained steam in recent decades and presently it ranks among the most complex and consequential issues facing not just Wheaton but other academically serious evangelical colleges as well. Put interrogatively, can a school like Wheaton continue to deepen its intellectual engagement and theological rigor while maintaining substantive ties to its (the word applies) fundamentalist past? Litfin is acutely aware of what’s at stake, and thus spends the better part of two chapters painstakingly laying out a rationale for Wheaton’s current practices with respect to faith statements

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*Can a school like Wheaton continue to deepen its intellectual engagement and theological rigor while maintaining substantive ties to its fundamentalist past?*

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and hiring—practices which foster a more-or-less theologically homogeneous professoriate. Wheaton shall remain a “systemic” Christian college, to use Litfin’s own parlance, not an “umbrella” one like Pepperdine, Valparaiso, or Baylor; the former seeks a particular faith commitment from all faculty while the latter actively encourage Christian thought and the hiring of committed Christian faculty, but stop short of statutory requirements. Litfin values both models, but sees Wheaton squarely in the “systemic” camp.

Litfin’s positions on faith statements are worked out in an extended argument with Boston College political scientist Alan Wolfe, who, in a celebrated article in the *Atlantic*

*Monthly*, “The Opening of the Evangelical Mind” (October 2000), argued that faith requirements like Wheaton’s and academic freedom represent mutually antagonistic principles. In rebutting Wolfe, Litfin makes a persuasive case that doing away with faith statements would amount to a net loss for intellectual pluralism in the United States, insofar as groups of thinkers desirous to pool their collective brainpower would be deprived of an institutional locus where such pooling could take place. Freedom of expression should apply not only to individuals, in other words, but to communities and institutions as well. What is more, since signing Wheaton’s statement is voluntary, and since many institutions and academic departments throughout academia practice myriad policies of de facto, if not de jure, exclusion, Wheaton’s statement is neither illiberal nor dishonest, but respectful, even expressive, of genuine pluralistic principles. One could even argue that such statements are necessary for the rich and diverse voluntary associational environment that Alexis de Tocqueville and his many intellectual disciples have admired about American democracy.

So touché, Professor Wolfe.

But in defending the viability of faith statements in the abstract, Litfin knows that a thornier dilemma awaits him still, one that greets him not from the distant pen of a secular social scientist but from the eyes of some of his most committed and promising faculty. “[T]he question must still be asked, how broadly or narrowly should . . . confessional identity be stated? And more basic still: who decides?”

In light of the dominant Protestant-Catholic split in America’s confessional landscape, the question could be rendered more pointedly still: given the tremendous rapprochement in attitude between Protestants and Catholics since the Second Vatican Council and under the Papacy of John Paul II, given the vibrancy of

new interconfessional movements (such as *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, or ECT), given the ecumenically-inclined, tradition-seeking orthodoxy of younger evangelical scholars, and given the truly shameful, anti-Catholic fear-mongering displayed by many past evangelical leaders, is it time that Wheaton broached the possibility—whether as a matter of principle in broadening its faith statement or (more prudentially) on a case-by-case basis of judicious exception—of allowing sympathetic Catholics to don cap and gown on its campus? Put differently, might Wheaton still solidly and proudly affirm its evangelical posture and history, but simultaneously recognize that the divisions of the sixteenth century and the doctrinal fall-out of twentieth-century intra-Protestant debates might not be the adamant decrees of the Holy Spirit but are matters for constructive theological engagement by people of good will? If I may be forgiven for overplaying my hand as *provocateur*, has the time for a Catholic Jackie Robinson arrived?

In answering this question negatively in language at once erudite, patronizing, quixotic, trenchant, and hedged, Litfin reveals himself worthy of his high perch, though perhaps constrained by the constituencies that keep it aloft. Litfin’s defense of the status quo depends heavily on warnings against a slippery slope: once an institution makes certain concessions to confessional change, it is ipso facto on a course toward the deracination of its animating principles and then, ultimately, to outright secularism. No doubt, for anyone who has pondered George Marsden’s *The Soul of the American University* or James Burtchaell’s *The Dying of the Light*, this “entirely predictable direction” toward secularism, as Litfin sees it, should constitute a genuine concern. Simply pooh-poohing fears of a slippery slope is not the better part of wisdom. Still, the dangers of a slippery slope should be balanced by considering the problems of superattenuated

retrenchment. That Litfin shrilly warns against one without sufficiently probing the consequences of the other does not comport well with a mind of Litfin's caliber.

By far the most unsatisfactory aspect of this book comes when Litfin appears to lecture (presumably his own faculty?) on how they should think about the current statement of faith and its policies of enforcement. He is especially irked by those who sign the statement with tepid enthusiasm, or who do so while wishing for future modifications, or who interpret it according to their own hermeneutical principles. Casting a president's task at one point as the interceptor of entropy, he makes clear that "no individual is free to decide for himself or herself what the statement means. To have everyone affirming the statement only after construing it to mean what they prefer it to mean is to negate the unifying function of the statement altogether." A Counter-Reformation Pope could appreciate this sentiment. One wonders then where lies the locus of authority for interpretation? Alas, some of the problems that have dogged Protestantism since the sixteenth century haven't diminished.

Yet alongside Litfin's more heavy-handed pronouncements one finds countervailing sentiments that suggest how probingly he has pondered the confessional issue and what it means for Wheaton's future. One finds intimations, in fact, of outright ambivalence. When considering whether Wheaton should move in the direction of a more inclusive Ecumenically Orthodox Christian University (EOCU), Litfin demurs, but not before dropping a line that he's "not set in concrete on this question." When considering whether certain Catholic faculty should be brought on board, he plainly states that "this vision attracts me," before defending a contrary position. And at one point, he makes allowance that a future consensus contrary to his own opinion may develop. "[U]ntil Wheaton as a whole is ready to amend its definition of

itself, this [current identity] is the one I am quite happy to live with and will work to maintain." Finally, to his great credit, Litfin makes clear that "systemic" institutions like Wheaton, at their best, allow for robust discussion of serious disagreements. "The healthiest give and take often occurs in the most cohesive groups, such as large, committed, garrulous families. Where there is an underlying climate of trust we typically find more open disagreement, not less. . . . Members of such communities are enabled and often encouraged to explore their differences, openly and fully, and when these differences wind up unresolved, to "agree to disagree, agreeably."

Whether its members agree or disagree, colleges, like all human institutions, grow, develop, and change. Litfin recognizes this squarely, noting that "institutions are never static; they are living things and require a constant choosing, even if only a choosing not to change." Wheaton itself has found out as much in recent years as decisions were made to relax behavioral policies against dancing and faculty drinking. The same faculty who have lovingly pored over the texts of C. S. Lewis may now enjoy a quaff of ale that Lewis himself would have relished. That a Catholic colleague might join them at the pub one day appears to remain an eschatological hope under Litfin's presidency, but then again eschatological longing has been the seedbed of many a concrete reform in Christian history.

So cheers, President Litfin. Thanks for a learned book and let's continue this important conversation.

Thomas Albert Howard

Robert Darden. *People Get Ready: A New History of Black Gospel Music*. New York and London: Continuum International, 2004.

It was in the 1930s that the influence of black gospel music first

extended beyond the walls of the church. Since then, black gospel has become a staple of American popular culture, impacting media ranging from radio to motion pictures. Despite its enormous presence in the American musical tapestry, this genre has only recently become the subject of serious scholarship. The earliest comprehensive efforts to document the history of black gospel music were published in the 1970s, and in more recent years, the likes of Mellonee Burnim, Portia Maultsby, Horace Boyer, Jerma Jackson, and Deborah Pollard have continued to expand the perimeters of research into this subject. In *People Get Ready: A New History of Black Gospel Music*, Robert Darden of Baylor University seeks his place among those who offer well-grounded discourse on this important topic.

Richly detailed and colorfully told, *People Get Ready* owes much of its narrative flavor to Darden's years of experience as the gospel music editor of *Billboard Magazine*. Darden states that rather than write an "encyclopedia of gospel music," his goal instead is to "somehow put it all in order, find the connections, and tell the stories of some of the most fascinating people on the planet." In roughly the first half of the text, Darden provides historical context for the emergence of black gospel by examining its West-African roots and the antebellum ancestry of the music, considering both slave religion and the Negro spiritual. He then examines the societal conditions of the Reconstruction era, the rise of Pentecostalism, and the northward migration of African Americans early in the twentieth century as forces that give rise to the music. In the course of this discussion, he addresses the connection between the barbershop quartet and the jubilee quartets. He also examines the place of African Americans in the blossoming recording industry.

In the last half of the book, Darden shifts his focus to the seminal personalities of black gospel. He begins this

discussion with biographical sketches of pioneering artists William Sherwood, Charles Tindley, Lucie Campbell, and Thomas Dorsey. He then examines the contributions of mid-century artists including Clara Ward, Rosetta Tharpe, Mahalia Jackson, and the Soul Stirrers. Alex Bradford, James Cleveland, Edwin Hawkins, and Andrae Crouch are the focus of Darden's discourse on black gospel's shift toward contemporary styles and larger commercial venues during and after the 1960s. Finally, Darden concludes with a look at current artists like Donnie McClurkin, Fred Hammond, and Kirk Franklin. While some readers may take issue with the scarcity of actual gospel music examples in the text, and others may complain that Darden could have given much more attention to Holy Hip Hop—black gospel's most recent trend—Darden's mastery of story-telling more than compensates for whatever omissions might be perceived. Although his lively and engaging narrative style owes much to his prior journalistic experience with *Billboard*, it is to his credit that he cites his own work only occasionally (I counted fewer than a dozen self-citations) and that instead, he uses sources that convey his wealth of knowledge and broad grasp of discourse on the topic.

At the outset, Darden announces to his readers that *People Get Ready* is neither a musicological study nor a theoretical treatise. One need not apply the rigor of professional musicology, however, to notice that the text was perhaps not as carefully proofread as it could have been. While his major points are largely intact, certain details are treated with such inaccuracy and/or inconsistency that they compromise an otherwise enjoyable reading experience. For example, Darden cites varied and conflicting dates for the Great Awakening, a flaw noticeable to even the reader who may not necessarily know what the Great Awakening was. The reader will certainly be confused to read that this

eighteenth-century religious revival took place in the 1730s, in the 1740s, and again during the nineteenth century. (This reviewer noticed the flaw in both the uncorrected, advance proof copy of *People Get Ready*, and in the final version of the book that was released to the public for sale.)

This flaw notwithstanding, *People Get Ready* is rich with history, insightful commentary, and sprinkled with heavy doses of passion and journalistic flare. Darden includes carefully chosen photographs to enhance his well-crafted narration, images which include publicity stills and candid shots of live performances, as well as historical field shots from the Library of Congress's famous Lomax collection. Music buffs will find its discography of particular use, and researchers will benefit from the wide array of bibliographic sources cited.

The magnum opus of books on black gospel music has yet to be written. In the meantime, however, true lovers of American music should certainly make a space for *People Get Ready* in their personal libraries.

Teresa L. Reed

Keith B. Miller, ed. *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.

The evangelical world has not handled evolution well. Furthermore, this sad condition need not have been, and it can be corrected. This is the message that motivates all the contributors to *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation*, a collection of essays skillfully selected by Keith B. Miller to effect a much-needed reconciliation between evolutionary biology and evangelical Christian theology. Especially worrisome to the contributors, all of whom are professing evangelicals, is the influence of young-earth creationism within the evangelical community. Hence each essay is specifically directed toward those who are in any way inclined to

respond to perceived tensions by attacking the merits of evolutionary theory.

Every potential source of tension receives its due regard in Miller's collection. We are supplied with essays on biblical hermeneutics, the problem of animal suffering and death, original sin, cognitive neuroscience and its implications for our conception of the human soul (though Warren Brown's paper on this topic creates a misleading impression that "non-reductive physicalism" (the view he defends) is the only intellectually viable option for evangelicals), environmental ethics, the aims and methods of the natural sciences, and any other topic that has ever led an evangelical Christian to raise questions about evolutionary biology. Apparent conflicts are treated forthrightly, but also with a pastoral sensitivity that reflects the authors' own intellectual struggles. It is frequently acknowledged that there are many areas where a fully satisfying solution must wait until a great deal of further research (both biological and theological) is completed.

An especially welcome touch are several brief devotional reflections interspersed throughout the book, all designed to invite the reader to view the evolutionary history of the universe as an awesome and praiseworthy display of the wisdom and power of God as Creator. These devotionals also serve the purpose of assuring evangelical readers that the contributors' acceptance of evolutionary theory has not led to any diminution in their ability to relate to God on a personal level, nor has it tended to stunt their growth in Christian character. Creation, understood as the doctrine that every aspect of the universe was intentionally given to it by its Creator, is strongly affirmed by all the contributors, yet the work of creation is regarded as having been carried out via the method of a gradual evolutionary development.

Several essays make it clear that this less antagonistic (or "concordist")

approach to the natural sciences has deep historical roots. Conrad Hyers and Edward B. Davis both cite John Calvin as a hermeneutical authority in support of the view that Scripture (and Genesis in particular) was never intended to teach the historical details of creation, but rather to present a framework within which we are taught general truths about God's nature and character, and our relation to Him. It is somewhat curious that Augustine is seldom cited in this volume (perhaps because he seems further removed from the evangelical community), but in fact he makes this very point as forcefully as anyone and therefore supplies us with an even deeper historical precedent for it. Davis does attempt to place the point of departure from this traditional view somewhere in the late nineteenth century, shortly after Darwin. Yet Mark Noll and David Livingstone show that, even after Darwin, there was significant support for a concordist approach within the evangelical community. The concordist view is clearly exemplified in the thought of such figures as Asa Gray, Charles Hodge, and especially Benjamin B. Warfield. Noll and Livingstone then issue a clarion call to evangelicals to return to the legacy of Warfield, et al., and reclaim the intellectual ground that was forfeited (they say) in the early twentieth century.

If there is a point at which evangelical readers might sense that Miller and his contributors are pressing their point beyond what is strictly necessary for the reconciliation they seek, it must be their nearly unanimous aversion to any sort of "intervention" in the course of natural history. It is important to note that this aversion is not a rejection of miracles. A willingness to affirm the historicity of the biblical miracles is usually regarded as a mark of evangelicalism, and most of the authors bear that mark as willingly as anyone. Thus they do not descend into deism. But when it comes to natural history (as opposed to salvation history), the attitude changes

dramatically. An anti-interventionist attitude is clearly discernible in almost every article, and it is not merely a concern that evangelicals have tended to put too much stock in our current inability to connect all the evolutionary dots. That concern is present too, and Miller himself contributes two papers (the second co-authored with David Campbell) that throw cold water on any attempt to argue for divine intervention on the basis of either a present lack of transitional forms in the fossil record or the remarkable "explosion" of life forms in the Cambrian period (Miller makes a strong case that the alleged lack of transitional forms is often grossly exaggerated). These have often been cited, mostly by evangelicals, as evidence that seems to require some sort of supernatural intervention as the only plausible explanation. But such "gappy" arguments are exceedingly perishable in any case (i.e., they "perish" as soon as someone does enough research to close the "gap" in our understanding), and so the authors are wise to counsel against any reliance upon them as a basis for natural theology. At most, evangelicals should take a "wait-and-see" attitude regarding the outcome of attempts to construct a fully naturalistic path through natural history, and that attitude is explicitly endorsed by several of the contributors.

Nevertheless, several authors make the much stronger claim that historical Christian theology (within which evangelical theologians surely wish to place themselves) should lead one to expect that the development of life on earth occurred naturalistically. In other words, evangelicals should not only lower their expectations for a natural theology derived from apparent gaps in natural history, but they should positively desire, for theological reasons, that there be no such gaps. The idea is that a creation that must be tinkered with is less praiseworthy and impressive than a creation that does not require occasional adjustments. Furthermore, we should

expect the God revealed in the Christian Scriptures to create in the most praiseworthy way. Therefore, we should expect Him to create without any "untidy" interventions.

This argument is presented most clearly and forcefully by Howard J. Van Till. Van Till claims that the creation possesses a "robust formational economy." This is his technical way of saying that the creation contains within itself all the resources necessary to form all the life forms we actually observe. After making the non-problematic (to evangelicals) point that non-theists have no business citing the "robust formational economy" of the creation as evidence against theism or in favor of any claims of purposelessness or randomness in the universe, Van Till goes on to claim that anything less than a robust formational economy would reflect badly on the Creator.

Needless to say, such a view makes one positively eager to see all "gaps" closed, and indeed that eagerness is found in many of the contributors. This eagerness is sometimes reflected in their tendency to lump young-earth creationism together with the more recent "intelligent design" movement as the target of their critique. Some authors occasionally suggest that both views are equally destructive of the intellectual development of the evangelical community. This suggestion is unfair, however, since many intelligent design theorists are perfectly comfortable with the common ancestry of all life on earth (this fact is occasionally acknowledged), and some are amenable even to Van Till's robust formational economy (though this fact is never acknowledged), although those who insist on special creation can tolerate neither.

Loren Haarsma, in a paper devoted to the compatibility of theistic belief and scientific method, presents this very issue in the form of a question about an historical case study, and (perhaps more modestly) leaves the answer up to the reader without explicitly weighing in on it himself. He

describes a very similar situation to ours that confronted our eighteenth-century forbears. In those days it was not clear whether Newton's laws of motion entail that the orbits of the planets are stable over very long spans of time. Newton himself assumed that the orbits are unstable, and therefore suggested that God occasionally sends comets (or other natural phenomena) into the solar system in order to prevent the planets from careening off into space. If he had been correct about this, it would have constituted powerful evidence for a special, active, and (in some sense) interventionist view of God's governance of the creation. But if Van Till is correct, it would also have looked like an inferior work of design. As it turned out,

Newtonian mechanics does yield stable orbits. But Haarsma asks us to consider what our reaction would have been if things had turned out differently. Suppose that the planetary orbits were unstable. "Would Christians consider that a good thing, or a bad thing?" he asks. The answer we give will reveal the theological presuppositions we have before we even take up the case of biological evolution, and which will surely be reflected in our response to "gap closures." Haarsma concludes with a simple and well-directed admonition to reflect on our theological presuppositions. We may at least acknowledge that the situation is puzzling, and not easily settled by quick appeals to Scripture or tradition. Yet if a cautious

"wait-and-see" attitude is indeed the most proper attitude to take, then Haarsma's admonition is just as applicable to those who expect all gaps to be closed as it is for those who are too inclined to cite gaps as evidence of divine intervention.

*Perspectives on an Evolving Creation* will be extremely valuable for anyone who is concerned about how Christians in general (not just evangelicals) should think about the relationship between science and theology. Every article is thoughtful, spiritually sensitive, and very well-informed. One can earnestly hope that it will bear the fruit of reconciliation that Miller and his contributors intend it to bear.

John Mullen

### Who would want to be God for a day?

How to know the raccoon  
dead on the side of the road  
was done with his ribbon  
of life? How to know  
whether the truck passing  
should or shouldn't kill us all?  
How to know when to bring  
the rains to the pine forest  
and when to let them burn?  
How to know when  
the tadpoles should birth  
and rise steaming to the surface  
of this pond, exactly  
here, in 100 Mile House,  
Northern BC on August 10  
at sunrise?

I'd rather  
float right by like a moth  
on a warm current,  
with only my body  
and the faith the sky  
will hold me, for a while.

Emily Wall

## a portrait of a Christian as a young intellectual

first published in June 1961; a commencement address given at Wittenberg University on June 6, 1960.

ONCE UPON A TIME—AND A VERY good time it was—being an intellectual meant being a Christian. These words, with apologies to James Joyce, describe a situation that exists no longer. By the judgment of many, being an intellectual today means being anything but a Christian—a judgment in which, for strange reasons, the fanatical secularist and the fanatical sectarian concur. We have met here this morning because we believe that this judgment is wrong. This university strives for academic excellence because of, not in spite of, its loyalty to the Christian faith. The church and the university need each other, for neither without the other can fulfill its high vocation. Indeed, I suspect that neither without the other can be trusted, and therefore I pledge my allegiance to both. An institution that is pledged to both, to Academe and to the Cross, must give special attention to the dilemma of the Christian intellectual, the not-so-simple believer, the child of God who has left the kindergarten. When the gimmick replaces the *Geist*, even on the campus; when piety is identified with sentiment and the ethic of the kingdom of God with conformity—then it is time to paint the portrait of the Christian intellectual for all to see.

“Each generation,” said G. K. Chesterton, “seeks its saint by instinct; and he is not what the people want, but rather what the people need.” What the people want today is not the Christian intellectual, whom both the church and the world repudiate; but that may well be what the people need. For without the cultivation of the life of the mind, the church betrays its own

great tradition, the very tradition in whose name the church often suspects the life of the mind. The task of the Christian university is, therefore, to call the church back to its tradition. On this Whitmonday, standing between the feast of Pentecost and the feast of the Holy Trinity, I want to summarize three principal features of that tradition. In keeping with the celebration of Trinity Sunday, I shall call these features: a passion for being; a reverence for language; and an enthusiasm for history. This Trinitarian portrait characterizes the Christian intellectual and the education in which he participates.

### a passion for being

The Christian intellectual has a passion for being. He believes that by the power of the God who has created and goes on creating all things new every day, all things have an essential goodness, impervious to any destructive force. Sometimes, I fear, our preoccupation with sin, guilt, and forgiveness has obscured this passion for being in Christian thought. We have so emphasized the corruption of all creation through the Fall that its continuing derivation from God and dependence upon God could no longer be recognized. For centuries, until Petrarca climbed the mountain, Christian thought neglected the goodness of all created being; although John Calvin lived in Geneva for more than half his life, he rarely if ever mentions the Alps in his sermons and books. But if we really mean it when we confess in the Credo that God is “Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible,” then we need to remember the struggle of the

*Jaroslav J. Pelikan*  
early church to assert and defend this confession against those who identified sin with the material world. The trouble with the world, so they maintained, is that it is made of stuff, which is intrinsically evil. In opposition to this the Christian faith declares that the material world is intrinsically good, encrusted though it may be with the scabs of sin and evil. Because it is intrinsically good, we ought to love it as God’s good creation. As a Christian doxology confessed almost a century ago:

The world is charged with the  
grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from  
shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the  
ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now  
not reckon his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod,  
have trod;  
And all is seared with trade;  
bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man’s smudge and  
shares man’s smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel,  
being shod.

And for all this, nature is never  
spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness  
deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the  
black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink  
eastward, springs—  
Because the Holy Ghost over the  
bent  
World broods with warm breast  
and with ah! bringt wings.

The first quality of the Christian

intellectual, then, is such a passion for being. Perhaps the greatest Christian intellectual of them all, St. Augustine, said (if you will pardon a little Latin) that *esse qua esse bonum est*, "being is good simply because it is being." The material world, because it is God's good world, is invested with His holiness and is the object of His continuing love. Fallen and bent it is, but there is still "the dearest freshness deep down things." More even than his fellow-believers, the Christian intellectual is one who recognizes this freshness and loves the stuff of the universe not as a substitute for, but as a corollary of, his love for God. This passion for being has become, if not any easier, then certainly more profound in our time because of the achievements and discoveries of the natural sciences. Since we are still recalling the centennial of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the embarrassment of many Christian intellectuals with the natural sciences deserves mention. They have found themselves and their faith threatened by the picture of the universe that came from telescope and microscope. In part at least, the cause of this embarrassment was the extravagance of some natural scientists, who strayed into theology as often as the theologians strayed into science.

Today the chastening of the past century has produced greater sobriety on all sides; and on campuses like this one Christian thought is beginning to reappraise its picture of creation and to discover that the size and the age of the world are no threat to a mature Christian worship of the Ancient of Days. With this reappraisal is beginning to come a deeper and more passionate love of the created universe, not as the object of man's exploitation but as the bearer and arena of God's grace. Certainly there is in the Christian view of creation an imperative that forbids man to pollute the atmosphere with the garbage of his thermonuclear orgies and thus to change forever the genetics of the beaver and the sea anemone. To love God is to love what God loves, and to

love it with passion and zeal. The Christian intellectual is charged with the responsibility of exemplifying this passion for being in his life and thought, so that men may look up from their gadgets and peer beyond their billboards to view the grandeur of God. For if the Christian intellectual neglects this responsibility, God will have to turn, as he has turned so often, to the Nicodemuses in His hidden church, who will do in secret what His disciples are afraid to do in public.

#### the reverence for language

It is, I fear, the Nicodemuses of the hidden church who often preserve the second feature of the Christian intellectual as well, the reverence for language. Yet the Christian cause depends upon language, and without it the life of the church would be impossible. I do not pretend to know why Johnny can't read; but I do know that if enough Johnnies can't read, Christian faith and thought as we know them will end. Pardon me for a personal reference. Today I, a theologian, am becoming a Doctor of Letters of this university. My gratitude for this honor is matched by my conviction that "letters," that is, the careful use and discrimination of language, is one of the theologian's primary responsibilities. In fact, much of the history of theology, which is the special area of my research and writing, is the history of words—the origin of theological words, often outside the Christian tradition; the application of these words to Christian revelation and their consequent refinement and clarification; the distortion of words by popular superstition. Thus the critics of theology are right when they describe it as a conflict over "mere words."

But there is nothing "mere" about words, and it is the task of the Christian intellectual to insist upon this. When the God of the universe, the Lord of heaven and earth, chose to make Himself known to men, He spoke to them through the prophets; and when the early Christians sought

to describe what God had done to them and for them through Jesus, they called Jesus the *Logos*, the Word and Mind of God. The Christian intellectual knows, therefore, that man's capacity for speech lies somewhere near the center of his uniqueness. Both the misery and the grandeur of humanity are bound up with the gift of language. The serpent *spoke* to Eve in the garden; God *spoke* to Moses on the mountain. And ever since then the temptations and the revelations of man have come through language. They still do. Hence a reverence for what language can do if it is used properly and a horror of what language can do if it is misused belong to the equipment of the educated man. Hear one educated man, E. B. White, who also incarnates the chastity of English prose style, giving voice to this reverence and horror: "Muddiness is not merely a disturber of prose; it is a destroyer of life, of hope: death on the highway caused by a badly worded road sign, heartbreak among lovers caused by a misplaced phrase in a well-intentioned letter, anguish of a traveler expecting to be met at a railroad station and not being met because of a slipshod telegram"—and, let the theologian add, betrayal of the faith once handed down to the saints by careless or deliberate ambiguity in the language of theology or devotion.

Unless the books and journals that cross my desk are unrepresentative samples, I fear that this virtue of reverence for language is not important in the moral theology of the American churches. At times I am tempted to paraphrase St. Paul and to say that there are three fundamental virtues—faith, hope, and clarity—and that the greatest of these is clarity. As the church and the school imitate advertising and government in debasing the mother tongue, the church school must be one place of refuge where a reverence for language and a chastity of style still prevail. In the so-called Dark Ages, which were not as dark as the textbooks say but were dark enough, lack of communication

brought on the breakdown of language and the impoverishment of culture. In our age, by contrast, the very growth of communication is bringing on the same results. An industry that spawns sights and sounds from 7:00 a.m. to midnight seven days a week is understandably impatient with the nuances of conjunctions or with the discrimination of English synonyms. Recent best-seller lists suggest that the publishing of books in the United States, while growing rapidly, may be becoming a satellite of television, to which one title after another owes its success. Perhaps, like the Irish monasteries of that earlier age, the Christian college may quietly cultivate the humanistic disciplines until their hour strikes again. Perhaps a generation that learns Russian on account of the sputniks may go on to read Dostoevsky in his own language. If we wait long enough, the poignancy of the human situation may persuade someone to take another look at the language of Sophocles, Aeschylus, Plato, and Paul.

But one language at a time, and clarity begins at home. I can think of no service more important for our culture than the growth of a reverence for language. Sins against syntax are often funny, but sometimes they are serious. Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, and Charles de Gaulle all prove that language does not merely describe action; it is action, and sometimes the only action equal to the despair or the glory of the hour. In the beginning was the Word: the capacity for words is still the point at which God contacts man, still the point at which the devil finds man most vulnerable. If you carry away from your courses in literature and language no more than an awe for the fearful potentialities of human speech and a zeal to make that awe a light of your life in home, church, and community, this university has served you well. A Christian intellectual is not necessarily one who has read all the Great Books on the lists compiled at the University of Chicago, though he

could do worse in his reading and probably will. But a Christian intellectual is one whose reading and writing, speaking and listening, are informed by a reverence for language as the divine gift for which the ancient hymn for Whitsunday extols the Holy Spirit:

True promise of the Father Thou,  
Who dost the tongue with speech  
endow.

#### **an enthusiasm for history**

To the passion for being and the reverence for language a third feature of the Christian intellectual must be added if our portrait is to be accurate: an enthusiasm for history. The history of philosophy shows that a passion for being has often been accompanied by a horror of becoming. The processes of change have seemed to corrode reality, and the infinite variety among individuals seemed to threaten the unity of all things in God. The Christian interpretation of God's activity in the world has never been satisfied with a passion for being; it has always felt obliged to come to terms with becoming, with change, with process, with variety. And therefore the Christian doctrine of God requires the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, for He is the Agent of change and the Ground of variety. There are many dispensations, but there is only one Spirit. Much of what Jesus was and did in the days of His flesh remained obscure to the disciples until the Spirit came to teach them all things and to bring all things to their remembrance. The Spirit still operates in the history of the people of God, opening up ever new opportunities and creating ever new variety while remaining one and the selfsame Spirit.

To be open to the activity of the Spirit, unpredictable though it is; to be appreciative of the variety of the Spirit, distressing though this often is to our preconceived notions; to be heedful of the leading of the Spirit in the church, novel though this continues to be—that is the enthusiasm for history which marks the Christian intellectual. Here, too, so-called secular studies, those of the social sciences, have made available

new insights into the variety and the change in human history. Instead of panicking at these insights and trying to evade them, as much of Christian thought has done, we need to recognize their validity and their limits as guides to human thought and behavior. What if these insights shake our stereotypes of what men are or puncture our clichés about how men act! The activity of the Holy Spirit has proved itself throughout history to be plastic enough for any such insights. An enthusiasm for His activity in its infinite variety and underlying unity permits us to do justice to all that present-day study can tell us about human personality and human society. It gives us the courage to work for improvement in society, and the wisdom to recognize just how limited any such improvement is. It releases us from the anxieties about saving ourselves that poison the minds and lives of so many; and it gives us the serenity to face every change, including our own eventual death, with dignity and faith.

A passion for being; a reverence for language; an enthusiasm for history: by this time you are probably wondering which, if any, of these features can be discerned in your graduation picture, and whether your graduation picture is a portrait of the Christian as a young intellectual. It is, I hope, even though (please pardon the pun) it may still be undeveloped and unenlarged; for the responsibility of this university is only for the exposure. As your parents, professors, and friends pray that the benediction of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, may descend upon you and abide with you, we pray as well that you may grow in the virtues of the Christian intellectual: a passion for being because the Father is the Creator and Source of all being; a reverence for language because Jesus Christ is the Word and Mind of the Father; an enthusiasm for history because the Holy Spirit works through history to produce variety and to unite all men in Himself. To this end may God grant us all His grace. †

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Xavier University of LA

**on the cover—**

James Disney is currently Senior Pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Buffalo, Minnesota. Born in Baltimore, Maryland on Halloween, 1957, his favorite childhood amusement was playing with crayons. He has a BA in philosophy from Johns Hopkins University and a Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In this work, Disney explores one of the most powerful metaphors in Scripture. When a rich man asked Jesus "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded, "sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me." Surprised by the immensity of this challenge the man retreated from Jesus. As they watched the man walk away Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Disney's painting invites us to consider our various ways of grasping at the kingdom rather than resting, like the gray-headed woman in the orange grove, in God's grasp upon us.

**on reviewers—**

Thomas Albert Howard

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**on poets—**

Jill Peláez Baumgaertner

served as Poetry Editor for *The Cresset* for fifteen years. She is currently Professor of English and Dean of Humanities and Theological Studies at Wheaton College in Illinois.

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writes from Canada. His poems have appeared in *The Cresset*, *The Christian Century*, *Queen's Quarterly*, and *Rock and Sling*.

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