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the Cresset

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SPECIAL LILLY ISSUE

the Cresset

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ONCE AGAIN THE PUBLISHER AND EDITOR OF *THE CRESSET* THANK THE LILLY ENDOWMENT, INC., AND THE LILLY FELLOWS PROGRAM IN HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS FOR THEIR GENEROUS UNDERWRITING OF THIS SPECIAL LILLY ISSUE OF *THE CRESSET*.

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Tree Planting Group, 1937. Lithograph, 8 1/4 x 10 3/4 inches

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IN LUCE TUA

Growing Pains

Maybe it was seeing *Glengarry Glen Ross* after a day spent working with articles for this issue. Mamet's version of working life among the real estate salesmen peers straight into hell. I think there is scarcely a more violent scene in American film than the one in which Alec Baldwin's management representative tells the gathered sales staff that each man's sales figures in the next week will determine whether he earns another week of employment, or—the ultimate disgrace—the set of steak knives. Further turning the screws on the miserable men sitting in front of him, Baldwin's character asks if they know just why their positions are as they are. He takes off his watch and puts it in front of a slumped and furious Ed Harris. In summary (and without the obscenities) he snarls, "It's because my watch cost eighty thousand dollars, and that's more than you make in a year. That's why you are nothing, and I am everything."

And that is the world into which, I told myself as I watched, our students are headed. The nice kids and the "hat guys," (my colleague Fred Niedner's shorthand for the ones who really resist teaching utterly), the eager and the timid, the thinkers and the shirkers, bright-eyed as they are in the first weeks of the fall semester, teary or effervescent as seniors. They must make their way in a world where one's value is determined by the dollars one earns. And somehow, we in the world of education have been seduced—coopted, misled, what?—into thinking of ourselves as preparation for this world of work. But if Mamet's view is correct, if he has seen as clearly as Arthur Miller did for an earlier generation in *Death of a Salesman* the grim realities of greed and deceit and failure in the values of Salesforce America, then what can we possibly be preparing students for? If my teaching is as far removed from such a world as I believe, then maybe the hat guys are right to ignore it, and to do everything they can to resist its messages. How can the values of charity, faith, hope, truth and goodness be of any use to them?

The covers of this month's *Cresset* describe a coherence between teaching and the world of work both exemplary and desireable. On the schoolhouse steps the younger children wait, and our attention focuses on the two older boys digging the hole for the young tree, now being supported by the teacher. The boys bend to their work, the arcs of their backs and heads re-figuring the delicate arch of the tree against the clear sky. Their labor and the shape of the tree fit together, as does the teacher with her arms forming yet another triangle to match the several in the picture. The lace of her collar, and the boy's overall straps, the school steps, the pile of displaced dirt beside the hole—again and again we are reminded of the coherence in all the parts of the activity.

The teacher holds the new tree. Balanced gently in its burlap sacking ball, the tree needs a place to grow, and the teacher has set up a situation where that can happen. She stands back and watches the slow labor of preparation, while the little girls next to her wait in two different attitudes, one lost in a contemplation of the leaf or flower she holds in her hand, the other looking downward to the roots of the tree. But in one way or another the exercise of tree-planting absorbs everyone's attention. It is a labor, and it is worth everyone's effort. No other tree is in sight, but the picture does not seem grim, as though the effort were doomed. The teacher presides, but she hardly dominates the scene, since the meaning of the event is not in her activity, but in the fact of the tree being planted. If it is not arithmetic or reading she is teaching, her efforts are nonetheless to set up a situation which will enable her students to complete a process that brings good for everyone—at some time in the future. Are they having fun? The question is irrelevant. Are they doing something important? Every detail answers, "Of course."

So, looking at the picture and reading the articles for this issue, I try to imagine these same questions. These are not, as the current locution goes, fun times in the academy. Our sense of purpose is questioned on every side, sometimes most distressingly from within the institutions we understand ourselves to be serving. Our methods and techniques are under pressure to produce satisfaction—in what, we may not be sure. We ask young people to pursue truth, often a difficult and uncomfortable proceeding, as anyone who has tried it knows, yet they are supposed to report that they strongly agree with the statement that they have enjoyed the process and would recommend it to a friend. As teachers we may see ourselves helping students learn to

plant trees, yet we are asked to provide statistics on the marketability of some fruit crop. Given these conditions, we may well feel disheartened and ill at ease.

But our own feelings and doubts ought not to obscure the truth of the matter: teaching and learning are still important. As the teacher in Grant Wood's *Tree Planting* must know the average rainfall, and dates of the last frost, we should know as much as we can about the world into which we are planting. What we are as teachers still affects how our students will experience the world in which they are judged and valued—or undervalued— for their performance as workers and as persons.

In this environment, the articles in this issue, sponsored by the Lilly Endowment and particularly the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts, provide both wisdom, encouragement and joy. Showalter, Holmes and Simmons —experienced teachers, professors of the value of learning—describe in various ways the meaning of the educational task as the church-related college construes it. Each considers a fundamental issue of the subject, whether the teacher's self, the relation between teacher, student and institution, or the relation between college and church. For good measure, we also include an example of what learning does, in Lilly Fellow Tom Holien's examination of the dynamics of religous conversion and martyrdom. Poetry on the subject of growing, planting, loving and knowing should help to keep your imagination on the subject at hand.

And should your imagination stray to the realities of growing things, a little hoeing might not be amiss. We'll be doing some cultivating at *The Cresset*, about which you'll hear more in the fall.

Peace,

GME

Twilight in Springtime

The late sun still alive in the sky, its light
sifted by limbs suddenly bristling with fresh,
forming leaves, the evening shadows are hauled out
once more, and the slow, sure sprawl of spring

growth, that all day had shown all around us, begins
its return into the familiar blue mist
of dusk. Rising between the trees, taking in
even the wild flowering fields and thin streams

now flowing in seasonal patterns straining toward some
distant delta, twilight's uneven shapes swarm
over the landscape, sweeping across meadows,
winding through the terraced hillsides—mysterious,

lovely forms darkly dancing in the midst of new life
before the black seductive otherness of night.

Edward Byrne

CONSIDER THE LILIES: A FAREWELL RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST, "SHIRLEY, TELL US ABOUT YOUR WORK"

Shirley Hershey Showalter

"Consider the lilies" is the only biblical command I have ever obeyed.

—Emily Dickinson

Have you ever paid attention to the lowly spider? The kind of attention that Simone Weil has taught us to use? I invite you today to consider the spider.

The spider crept into my mind a few months ago when I gave an IHC lecture at the Middlebury Public Library on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" in which I argued that an important key to understanding Jonathan Edwards' most famous sermon is another one of his texts—a scientific treatise on spiders written, scholars estimate, in 1714, when he was just 11 years old. The point I wanted to make about Edwards' sermon in that lecture was that, despite its fiery brimstone reputation, the sermon focuses much more on God's love than on fear. You will remember that at the heart of the sermon lies a very famous image—we are held by a slender thread over the angry, yawning, pit of hell. I argued that our attention should not fixate on the pit. It should focus on the thread.

Edwards' 1714 treatise on spiders showed me how much spiritual wisdom results from taking painstaking care to study another living thing. A precocious child, shaped by a Puritan community in which nature's purpose was to provide visible signs of the invisible, could combine observation and imagination in such a way as to meet God in the process.

Edwards was intrigued by the spiders' ability to spin webs. His diagrams illustrate the difference between the two types of silk the spider uses and the two kinds of spinneret's which produce these silks. He recognizes the difference between the radial and lateral part of the web. Listen to the joy in his voice as he describes what he has seen by standing in the shadow of an opaque object:

> [T]hese webs may be seen well enough in the day time by an observing eye, by their reflection in the sunbeams. Especially late in the afternoon, may these webs, that are between the eye and that part of the horison that is under the sun, be seen very plainly, being advantageously positioned to reflect the rays. . . But I have often seen that which is much more astonishing. . . . I have seen a vast multitude of little shining webs, and glistening strings, brightly reflecting the sunbeams, and some of them of great length, and of such a height, that one would think they were tacked to the vault of the heavens, and would be burnt like tow in the sun, and make a very beautiful, pleasing, as well as surprising appearance. (Edwards, *Basic Writings*, 32-33)

After reading this description, our perception of the slender thread above the pit of Edwards' hell in his famous sermon, written years later, changes. We can imagine that thread in its wondrous attachment to the "vault of heaven."

Because spiders and webs have been coming into my reading in many ways in recent years, I was not surprised to find myself utterly fascinated by a recent article in the *New York Times* science section. The April 19 issue carried a long article on the arachnid family.

Shirley Showalter *was Senior Fellow in the LFP during 1993-94. A Professor of English at Goshen College, she has written extensively on the experience of developing whole persons in academic settings. This essay remains in the form of the talk she gave at the final meeting of the Lilly Colloquium in May of 1994. During the course of the talk she refers to many members of that group, and to the conversations and readings of the year's work. This is her first essay to appear in* The Cresset.

Dr. Catherine R. Craig, an evolutionary ecologist at Yale featured in the article, devotes her life to figuring out why and how spiders spin webs. Her theory goes like this: the web, or orb, is "among the spider's most dynamic and responsive traits, a cunning weapon designed to lure prey by exploiting an insect's fundamental need for food, flowers, and open spaces." The spider is a trickster.

The spider has adapted very well to evolution. Over eons of time, the strength, elasticity, and versatility of web silks has increased. Evolving a refined type of silk has led to at least 10,000 different species, including ones that left the dim forest and began to spin webs under the open sun.

Craig's work has changed the study of insect-spider web interactions from being considered a primarily passive process to being a highly active one, wherein the web is a sign with power to attract its prey through imitation and suggestion. Webs are not invisible; they only appear to be in order to allure. Web silks have the ability to reflect light in the ultraviolet range of the spectrum. Insects follow something called the open space response. They need open space "to help them navigate, and because ultraviolet light can come only from the sun or the sky, a bit of it glittering is like a billboard proclaiming free range ahead." (NYT, April 19, B8)

A second type of seduction is even more sophisticated and is used by more highly evolved species, big web weavers, Argiope and Nephila. The Argiope decorate their webs with thick strands of silk in the middle to create zigzags or a cross-hatch pattern. These also reflect UV light. They resemble blossoming grasses or nectar guides on flower petals. As a result, they attract pollinators—big, meaty bumble bees. The bee sees the decoration but not the rest of the web because the other sections do not reflect light.

At an even greater level of sophistication, the Argiopes vary the decorations from web to web so that their prey cannot learn from their mistakes to identify a predictable pattern of decorated webs.

What does the spider have to do with the central purpose of the question of this talk, "Shirley, tell us about your work?"

A great deal. And a great deal more than I have time or words to say. You are probably ahead of me already, making connections. A spider web looks a lot like Dorothea of Gaza's wheel, an image we early on decided would be an important one for us. It has a hub—God, and its radials bring us all closer to each other as we near the center. In that way it is an image of community.

It is also an image for the teaching process. Some of you know that, though I agree with Parker Palmer's assertion that the classroom needs a "third thing," I have never been content with his use of the term "subject" as the triangulator. To me that word can too easily be read as the "discipline." It's like the old saying that the ideal classroom would be Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other. The third thing in that picture is the log, which would fit Parker's model, I suppose, if the subject is forestry. But I would like it better if the log became a seesaw. I would suggest that a picture of teaching that does not allow movement is an inadequate picture. Teaching is an active, not a static process, and our images need to account for this activity. Just as scientists gave up the notion of the passive web, so we too need to rethink our picture of the classroom. The idea of a dynamic, active web spun by the teacher out of her or his own body, attracting the student by reflecting light appeals to me a great deal at the moment.

But can movement be the subject? No, but perhaps motion toward God can be, assuming that whatever discipline we teach has a connection both to the divine and to the life stories of all the participants in the class. I accept by faith an old-fashioned axiom—Cardinal Newman's in *The Idea of the University* (1852): "All branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and work of the creator."

To embrace Newman on this point is, from the modern university's point of view, to take a step backward philosophically. I am prepared to be a contrarian if necessary, but I hope not to be a defensive and bitter one. I think it may actually be possible that we in church-related colleges and universities may have the opportunity to step ahead rather than step backward. The time is coming, and now is, that belief in the unity of all things may again be possible. That unity, however, will not be the unity of the Great Chain of Being or even Benedict's ladder of humility. I hope it won't be a mushy New Age relativism either. Diana Eck is trying hard to find it. The work I feel called to is not constructing a philosophy of unity (á la Casaubon in *Middlemarch*) but rather creating a unified educational community, joined together at many levels—intellectual, spiritual, and social—in many complex ways, like a web. For me, community building, even at the local level, has all the joys and challenge of the epic life Dorothea Brooke craved.

The hunch I am following is that the unity within the creation, so much under attack in our pluralistic and fragmented world, may still be there, but not in the places where we have looked in the past. That's why I find myself looking to the spider and thinking about another kind of creation than the Logos version.

And that is also why I believe autobiography is such a powerful force in the creative learning process. Parker Palmer wrote in 1990 that "the major ideas at the heart of every discipline arose from the real life of a real person—

not from the mind alone, but from the thinker's psyche, body, relationships, passions, political and social context. . . .often . . . in response to some great suffering or hope that is still with us today" (*Change* Jan/Feb 1990). The teacher's job is to tell the narrative of the subject in such a way as to ignite within the students the same process which created the subject's narrative.

The student connection to the subject, like the bee's connection to the spider, is through desire. Students always yearn, metaphorically at least, for open space, for food, for flowers. By reaching for beauty and for food students get ensnarled in the webs of their greatest teachers, who show their students larger forms of their own desires. Sometimes the student feels consumed in this process as an old desire dies and a new one arises. Even if the student escapes entrapment, he or she learns that education is a series of small deaths on the way to the big one.

But I cannot stop with this image of the teacher as spider, because we need a picture that is not only active, we need a reversible one. At this stage of my career, I am most interested in discovering and growing new spinners. I tried to be that kind of leader in Colloquium and will hope to encourage my Goshen students next year to seek learning in order to become weavers of their own tales. The spinner weaves a web of connection from her own life and to the life of the discipline in order that the student may catch a glimpse of the vault of heaven at the furthest reaches of the silk.

The web of reciprocal connection that binds us to our students and to our subject can lead us individually and collectively to God. In the imagery we have used so far, God can be seen as the ultraviolet light, which is the thing that animates the process of active web making. Hence, *"In luce tua."* But God is also in the spider, in the web, and in the prey. Diana Eck showed us how complex our monotheistic image of One God really is. We have one God with many faces. In this case, we can see, depending upon our vantage point, God the lover, God the weaver, God the atonement, and God the trinity. By standing in a relation of awe to our subjects, our students, and our own lives, we begin to send darts of love into the cloud of unknowing that surrounds the great mystery whose center is God.

Now let us see what happens when we think specifically of Jesus in the role of spider-teacher. Imagine, for example, Jesus, the peasant Jew, in the classroom of Galilee, speaking on a plain against a bank of wildflowers growing in profusion. It must have been springtime then, too. Watch what happens in Luke 12: 22-34 as Jesus the trickster, storyteller, weaver, and wisdom figure spins a web:

> Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?
>
> Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.
>
> Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Luke 12:22-34, NIV)

If we take a saying like this seriously, hoping to apply it to our lives in the radical way it was intended rather than the spiritualized way it has often been presented to us, we will find it a hard saying. According to our colleague Rick DeMaris, scholars think that Luke probably contains more utterings of the historical Jesus than the other Gospels, which means that, since it is the one in which his politics are most radical, he is most challenging to us today to the extent we see ourselves as members—or aspiring members—of either the religious or educational establishment of our day.

My friends, Jesus did not have a church-related higher education. In fact, he caused a lot of trouble for folks who did. Marcus Borg understands the radical nature of Jesus in *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time.* In fact, his thesis can be applied to these verses, even though he did not use them in his book.

Verse 24, for example, refers to ravens, which would have been considered unclean birds, since they eat dead flesh. They probably, along with the dogs under the cross, ate the flesh of crucified peasants. But Borg has demonstrated convincingly how Jesus refused to participate in the purity cults of his day. He wants us to consider the "unclean" ravens God chooses to feed with carrion. Perhaps it is not too much to imagine that Christ was considering his own giving up of the flesh when he chose the raven by which to make his example. He knew how much more God cared about the disciples, and about us, because he was preparing himself for the ultimate sacrifice.

Verse 24 is also a gendered verse, for it tells us the ravens neither sow nor reap. In the ancient world, sowing and reaping were the activities of men. In contrast, the lilies neither spin nor weave (in some translations) or labor. Spinning and weaving were women's work. Jesus is, therefore, telling both men and women something about work in this passage. He was telling us to work in a way that is free from fear and worry.

Interestingly, Luke 12: 22-34 does not figure prominently in many of the books devoted to this Gospel. John Howard Yoder, in *The Politics of Jesus*, says nothing about it. Richard Cassidy and Robert Tannehill barely mention it in their own book-length studies. A person who does mention this passage, however, is Simone Weil, in *Waiting for God:*

> Christ proposed the docility of matter to us as a model when he told us to consider the lilies of the field that neither toil nor spin. This means that they have not set out to clothe themselves in this or that color; they have not exercised their will or made arrangements to being about their object; they have received all the natural necessity brought them. If they appear to be infinitely more beautiful than the richest stuffs, it is not because they are richer but a result of their docility. Materials are docile too, but docile to man, not to God. . . . For us, this obedience of things in relation to God is what the transparency of a window pane is in relation to light. As soon as we feel this obedience with our whole being, we see God.

The wisdom of the lilies, then, lies in obeying our creator, which seems to mean becoming transparent, invisible, so that the self God created us to be can shine through. I heard the same message when I talked to retired Goshen College professor of biology Merle Jacobs, a passionately learned man Simone Weil would have loved. He has been paying acute attention to spiders and fruitflies all his life. He knows what Abraham Heschel means by the term "radical amazement." When I asked him if he thinks spiders have something to teach us about wisdom, he did not laugh. In fact, I could tell he had been thinking about this a long time himself. (He loaned me a video of the spider so that all of us could see the fascinating process of web spinning.) His answer to my question was that "spiders have in-born wisdom." In other words, they are docile: "They have received all the natural necessity brought to them." Who they are and what they do is not only the basis of their beauty; it is their connection to God.

We have seen Jesus spinning a web for us in this passage. In the exact center of that web is verse 27—"Consider the lilies, how they grow." I would propose that that verse is in the living center of this room also and of the Lilly Fellows Program. The purpose of the lilies—the Lillies—is to grow, to become larger in love and larger in wisdom.

There's an irony in this passage that has to be bridged if the spider imagery is to be helpful to us as Christian teachers and scholars. The lilies grow without spinning. Jesus himself, of course, was spinning a metaphorical web in the passage about not spinning. But he was doing it in complete freedom, which is at the heart of this passage about work. What was his secret? His total obedience to his mission? His ability to see the lily as God sees it? His profound love for his disciples and his desire to release them from their fears? To all these, yes.

In doing so, he is like Sophia, the wisdom woman of both canonical and noncanonical Old Testament literature, who like Athena and Hestia of ancient Greece and Spider Woman of numerous Native American peoples is associated with spinning and weaving and with creation. Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza was first to name the connection between Jesus and Sophia, and Borg picks it up in his book in chapter five.

The question now is: how does all this material about spiders and lilies help answer the question about my work? I have been implying all along that my work is to seek God and that this process is a communal, interactive, and nonauthoritarian one. Notice that not only have I not said I am a "Scholar" or "Culture Critic," I have not said I am a "College Teacher," either. This year has freed me to think bigger than any disciplinary boundary or professional role. I have begun to exorcise some of my own fears as an academic. If fear is the heart of the problem of the academy, as Parker Palmer said, and Jim Champion seconded, then we have to name it in its various forms in order to become strong enough to be obedient to the best that is in us and, therefore, be free to grow. Part of my work, therefore, is to decrease the role of fear in my own life and in the communities of which I am a part.

It has taken me a whole year to become free enough to do so, but today, I am ready to confess some of my own fears, in the hopes that fear may weaken whatever hold it has in your life. Here they are, my four **F**-words.

1. I fear failure—in the forms of being inept, out of control, different, patronized. I need to say here how moved I was when one of our members, Tom Holien, broke the bonds of that fear by using his initial failure in the classroom as the center of his updated spiritual autobiography. I would like to follow his example by confession that a lot of what I have to say today is shadowed by fear. If the midwest AAR meeting was an intellectual highlight for Paul [Harvey], it was for me an intellectual lowlight. After I heard Stephanie [Paulsell] read her paper on Marguerite d'Oignt, based on eight years of paying attention to texts I did not know in languages I am too old to start learning, I wondered if I had anything to say at all on what were basically the same subjects. I had to learn humility—again.

Roberta Bondi knows about this problem: "Cultivating humility also means that we will begin to stop measuring ourselves continually against others—a problem ancient Christians had, too, judging by the many times it is mentioned in the literature." Like Tom Holien, I found freedom from my fear by examining it, changing the things I can control, and accepting myself for that which I cannot change, nor perhaps should.

2. I fear being forgotten. Knowing that I am about to leave all of you soon and knowing that someday I must leave all my loved ones, I fear my own mortality. When an academic feels the shadow of this fear, it's time to get down to work in the form of print, something we have more faith in than in our bodies, which we know are in the process of deserting us forever. We have named this fear appropriately—we call it "publish or perish."

3. I fear feeling, the seat of wisdom. The academy trained me to use my mind, for which I am grateful, but I am sorry that I have wasted so much energy trying to keep feeling at bay, especially in my early career. I felt I had to break the stereotypes held about women. I was the first married woman with a doctorate to receive tenure at Goshen College outside of the field of nursing. The year was 1989. As a pioneer, I tried to be a synthesizer of mind and heart, in that order. As an emerging elder, I hope to be a fearless advocate of the heart without closing the mind, as Roberta Bondi has been in her autobiographical essay in *The Cresset* (June 1993).

4. I fear the fragility of webs. This may seem like an odd fear, but it is not. My theology has changed enormously from my early years, when my mother was creating that scrapbook featuring Sallman's *Head of Christ.* The more I give up of my old ideas of atonement and salvation, the whiter my knuckles become, trying to cling to what is left. Sometimes I can identify with Henry Adams: "He saw before him a world so changed as to be beyond connection with the past. His identity, if one could call a bundle of disconnected memories an identity, seemed to remain; but his life was once more broken into separate pieces; he was a spider and had to spin a new web in some new place with a new attachment."

These are a few of my fears. And here is what I learned from the spider about how to deal with them. You may wonder how spiders can avoid getting caught in their own webs. They know where the sticky zones are and have learned to avoid them, walking only on the dry areas. With "in-born wisdom," they focus on what is important. They are content to be lowly. They work without anxiety. They spin and then wait. I aspire to that kind of simplicity, or docility, as Simone Weil put it, in my own work.

In the meantime, as I search for the kind of simplicity that lies on the yonder side of complexity, I work in a community and in the classroom. I return from this year freer from fear than when I arrived and full of the L-word, love—love for all of you, for all of the writers and artists who have pierced my soul here in this house, and for the God who has made all things possible. Here, then, is my list of verbs that I expect will shape the way in which I work and will bring the content of my work to me.

1. *to listen.* This is another word for paying attention. But today I focus on the sense that often gets neglected, as Beth [Hoger] has pointed out, in favor of the sense-metaphor of sight. I want to listen with my whole being, to listen my students, colleagues, friends and even sometimes strangers into voice. I want to take Beth's challenge seriously: "Listen for those whose hearts are burdened by things we don't ever pray about." When I am listening, I can often hear the fear of the other and learn in the process to name more of my own fear.

I also want to listen to whatever text I am reading in the same way that Barbara McClintock described her work as a scientist—with a "feeling for the organism." If I learn to do this deeply, I may have the privilege of participating in the wise admonition of Julian of Norwich—"let your life be a text." This radically personal and yet communal text, influenced by years of study and reflection—my life—has begun to become a new source of authority for me. It gives me a base when speculation is necessary in scholarship (a point Paul made at the AAR), it offers empathy to others, and it's one text I always have with me in the waiting room.

2. *to play, celebrate.* I was notably better at this part of my work this year than I usually am. Being around so many younger people was part of it. But so was the contemplative practice. Perhaps Benedict had to warn the monks against laughter because when we are in touch with our spirits, we are inclined toward joy and laughter. Remember how much Kathleen Norris learned about play from the monks and from becoming monkish herself? I think contemplation inevitably leads us to focus on grace, as Luther did. And grace fully realized leads always to joy. I have been very impressed by the festive celebrations here—at Christmas, in the freshman production, at parties, and at Easter. For all that lugubrious Bach, Lutherans truly know how to celebrate. At least from a Mennonite perspective they do. And it helps to throw in some Methodists, and Disciples, and seekers, and Catholics. I have enjoyed learning to play from and with you, making up for the sobriety of my youth. As Susan Russell says, "It's never too late to have a happy childhood."

3. *to heal, to give.* This part of my work I understand as directly related to the role models I have been privileged to have as a Mennonite. Because Mennonites have focused on orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy—living the word rather than believing only—and because they have tried to

take the hard words of Jesus seriously, they have been blessed by numerous saints. If I had time I would tell some of their stories. They are always stories of swimming against the tide, of being able to do a lot of good in the world because they were not anxious—they did not care who got the credit. They were willing to be transparent. They found their inborn wisdom. They turned the values of this world upside down. They showed an ambitious little girl and young woman another way to be.

I discovered this year, in hours of silence and sometimes darkness, just how much I owe to the cloud of witnesses who have guided me in the past and in the present. You met one of my mentors, Mary Oyer. Buzz Berg mentioned what happened to him when she came and led the hymns. I am glad it was Mary who got to him. She got to me too. After her visit, I wrote these words in my journal. "I love the way Mary closes her eyes and goes inside herself as she speaks. Then, for a moment after she has been to the center, her eyes glow, and we get to see a reflection of her spirit shine on her face for a few seconds. Her voice often lilts if she is speaking or singing while the light is on her face. I saw that inside-out light first on the face of Dom Helder Camara in a film I showed in a class. I saw it again in the Cocody Evangelical Church on the face of an old African woman three benches behind me as she prayed in a strange tongue. Today I realized that I have probably been seeing the glow on Mary's face for years but was too close to recognize it."

In order to illustrate the verb "to heal" I am going to need some help. I am going to read a passage from Sharon Parks, *The Critical Years.* It is a narrative of a young woman, who might have been a Lilly. She sounds like one:

> Many of us might admit that we . . . were drawn to this place [Harvard Divinity] by the modest desire to learn to see everything clearly. Though it sounds presumptuous, we who have spent two or more years here, dissecting holy Scriptures, comparing world religions, constructing and deconstructing the concept of God, cannot pretend any lack of ambition. We did not come here to satisfy cool academic curiosities, but rather to learn how to see everything—the whole picture of life—clearly. We came to explore the very mysteries of God, to expand our view of the world, and to discern what it is that the universe demands of us.
>
> After being here for a while, we have discovered that the process of learning to see religiously is a difficult, if not overwhelming, endeavor. For in delving into questions of ultimate meaning, we have learned how blurred is our vision, how tentative and partial our . . . insight. In this, we are like the blind man from Bethsaida, who even with a miracle, could only slowly and gradually learn how to see. . . .
>
> Thus we have been involved in the process of naming our Gods. This process has demanded not only that we clarify issues of personal faith and belief, but also that we regard anew some of the global issues of human struggle. . . .So in the process of naming the Gods, we have been naming some demons too. We have seen and named the terrifying demons of militarism, racism, and sexism in our world. These appear to us as horrifying patches of darkness, frightening shadows that make us want to shut our eyes tightly and return to the comforts or our former blindness. . . .
>
> Last summer I was in Israel, working on an archaeological dig. At the site of the ancient city of Dor, each day as I swung my pick into the age-old soil, I was inwardly chipping away at just these sorts of issues. I expended a good deal of energy cursing the facts of human suffering in the world, and trying to imagine some kind of hope of restoration.
>
> Excavating at the level of the Iron Age can be rathertedious; only rarely did we turn up any precious small finds. Most of the time was spent staring at dirt walls and broken pottery shards. In my square, not even one whole vessel was uncovered all season—just so many broken pieces, scraps of ancient civilization. All of the brokenness appeared to me as an accurate metaphor for understanding the world. Broken and crushed, every piece of it; broken with small personal pains, as well as with overwhelmingly large human struggles. Yet as the summer went on, and I kept staring at the pottery, I slowly started to notice something more than just the brokenness. Some of the pieces of clay, however broken, were really quite beautiful.
>
> Later in the summer, I found out about the business of pottery mending. This tedious work goes on year-round in a cathedral-like building not far from the tel. Here ancient vessels have been slowly and carefully reconstructed. I remember being completely amazed at seeing those huge restored jugs for the first time. How could anyone have possibly managed to piece together so many small nondescript chips of clay?
>
> Seeing those restored vessels encouraged me to imagine perhaps that at least some of the world's brokenness could be overcome. I began to picture myself in a kind of vocation of mending, of repairing some of the world's brokenness.
>
> To mend the world. To proclaim a radical vision of social transformation that would prevent future brokenness from occurring. These are the tasks that I perceived the world to be demanding of me. (130-131)

4. Finally, my work is *to connect* as a spider connects. You heard Dr. Craig describe how strong and flexible is the silk the spider spins. The spider throws herself upon the wind. Think of Diana Eck and her chapter on breath. Then think of yourself being tossed up on that wind, trailing your silk as a reverse parachute. Then think of yourself doing that all through your life. Being at the matrix of a complex set of relationships, walking on the nonsticky part of the web so that you don't get caught in your own trap, dining on honey bees, thinking only about what you were created to do. Perhaps that image will inspire you as much as it has inspired me.

Mark Schwehn ended his book, *Exiles from Eden,* with a brilliant reading of the two creation stories in Genesis.

Only when I revisited the last chapter yesterday, on the suspicion that I would find my own conclusion in the response to his, did I realize that, once again, as we did with the wheel image of Dorothea of Gaza earlier this year, Mark and I had settled on the same image. For Mark the spider image, as it was used by the early modernists Henry Adams and Max Weber and later by Clifford Geertz to denote human ability to make without the aid of a creator, is unsatisfying and discomforting. He says on page 135, "If we must think of ourselves as spiders spinning webs of meaning, we should be sure to reflect upon the less comforting features of this image: the thin connections to the world."

The problem Mark notes in the modernist view of creation is that it functions autonomously—at its worst, it leads us to an image of the pit but without the slender thread of connection to God. Instead of denying the fragility of the thread as I attempted to do with Jonathan Edwards, I would rather direct us all to a third creation story as it is found in the book of Proverbs.

Throughout both canonical and noncanonical wisdom literature stands a woman of tremendous importance to me. She is an image projected by male writers and, therefore, subject to some scepticism from feminists, especially since she is contrasted so strongly with the female personification of evil—the temptress. However, she offers both women and men a sign of hope, for she is a spinner who knows God; in fact, she is God's partner in creation. Some scholars believe that the famous appendix to the book of Proverbs—which no doubt has been the text of thousands of sermons on Mother's Day—Proverbs 31, the poem to the virtuous woman—is really a hymn of praise to Wisdom herself. By the way, that poem mentions spinning, weaving, and sewing in five separate sections. Weaving and sewing is what Wisdom does when she isn't buying fields, planting vineyards, etc. My favorite line is "She is clothed in dignity and power and can afford to laugh at tomorrow." In chapter 32 she is extolled in the third person. In chapter 8—which is in almost the exact center of the canon (p. 588 out of 1145 pages in the NIV) in the same position to the whole Bible that "consider the lilies" is in Jesus' sermon on anxiety—she speaks her own poem:

> The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
> the first of his acts of old.
> Ages ago I was set up,
> At the first, before the beginning of the earth.
> When there were no depths I was brought forth,
> when there were no springs abounding with water.
> Before the mountains had been shaped,
> before the hills I was brought forth;
> before he had made the earth with its fields,
> or the first of the dust of the world.
> When he established the heavens, I was there,
> when he drew a circle on the race of the deep,
> when he made firm the skies above,
> when he established the fountains of the deep,
> when he assigned to the sea its limit,
> so that the waters might not transgress his command,
> when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
> then I was beside him, like his master workman;
> and I was his daily delight,
> rejoicing before him always,
> rejoicing in his inhabited world
> and delighting in the children of humans (8:22-31).

Here is a spinner who spins not *ex nihilo* but as a partner to the creator-God. Here also is a spinner who is not anxious, who laughs at tomorrow. Here is a spinner who caught me in her web this year, who convinces me that through my work I can partake of her work. If I am not mistaken, your feet are in the sticky zone too.

Here we are then, the caught ones, the taught ones about to say good-bye. George Eliot said that every parting reminds us of death. But we know that in death there is also birth. That is why we are ending with a feast, the same farewell Jesus gave to his disciples. We are "each other's bread and wind" and having been to Paris—or to Eden—once in our lives, we have it with us always.

As I bid you farewell, I hope that you will fare well, and spin well, and when all your spinning is done, I wish you an ending like this one, once again from Jonathan Edwards. Edwards had the idea, a mistaken but elegant one, that all flying insects headed out over the ocean to die. The season is the end of summer, as fall begins to add a nip to the evening air—the season of transformation and of hope for those of us whose lives have been lived in school. If I could choose my own time for the final farewell, it would be on an early September morning just as the sun breaks through the blackness on the horizon:

> When the sun shines pretty warm [the insects] leave [the trees] and mount up in the air, and expand their wings to the sun, and flying for nothing but their own ease and comfort, they suffer themselves to go that way, that they find they can go with the greatest ease, and go where the wind pleases; and it being warmth they fly for, they find it cold and laborious flying against the wind. They therefore seem to use their wings, but just so much as to bear them up, and suffer them to go with the wind. So that without a doubt almost all aerial insects, and also spiders which live upon trees and are made up of them, are at the end of the year swept away into the sea and buried in the ocean, and leave nothing behind them [. . .] but their eggs, for a new stock next year. ❑

TEACHING AS FORMATION

Arthur F. Holmes

In his recent provocative book, *Exiles From Eden*, Mark Schwehn discusses three possible accounts of the academic vocation—the transmission of knowledge and skills, the making of knowledge, and the cultivation of character. He complains that, while scholarship (the making of knowledge) has been promoted in importance in the modern research university, the other two have been demoted.

Not so, one would hope, in church-related colleges. We tend to regard ourselves primarily as teaching institutions, and what Socrates called "the improvement of the soul" has been a major concern throughout the history of Christian involvement in education. Moreover, care of the soul has traditionally been associated with the transmission of knowledge, particularly knowledge of the Christian gospel and its implications. And church-related colleges have given renewed attention of late to *moral* development, while a literature has been emerging on *faith* development by writers like James Fowler, Sharon Parks and Stanley Hauerwas.

In approaching our topic, therefore, I want to comment on the church's history of involvement in higher education, then to ask how the nurture of souls might affect how we teach, and finally to reflect on other aspects of the teacher's work. I find I cannot separate moral and spiritual formation either from each other, or from intellectual development, at least from growth in Christian understanding. Nor should this be surprising. If faith without works is dead, as the epistle of James declares, moral development is the natural concomitant of spiritual formation. And if, as St. Augustine found, faith is understanding's step and understanding is faith's reward, then faith development is both nourished by and nourishes understanding. His *Confessions* reveal the reality of "faith seeking understanding"; his intellectual hunger for the truth reminds me of Paul's prayer that God would give you "a spirit of *wisdom*, and of revelation in the *knowledge of him*, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may *know* what is your hope" (Eph. I). So we shall have to consider all three aspects (intellectual as well as moral and spiritual formation), and their interrelationships as we think about "teaching as formation." There can be no compartmentalized spiritual formation.

In its educational calling, the church historically pursued three interrelated emphases that reflect this. They are first, the improvement of the soul; second, the unity of truth; third, what some writers call the "doxological," praising God for his wisdom, power and goodness revealed in our studies.

Even at first glance we should not be surprised that both moral development and an integrated understanding are related to the spiritual life—for *integration* is what all three emphases have in common, plainly so with the *unity* of truth in relation to God, and with the doxological, but also with formed character, which is a matter of integrated moral identity, the same day after day, the same inwardly and outwardly. It's not just a motley array of actions and behaviors, nor of good intentions and even dispositions that never get implemented. Ethicists ask what is the unifying virtue, the disposition that motivates and draws into harmony all the other virtues that should characterize a person. And the Christian tradition answers, "The highest virtue that integrates one's life should be love of God, the highest good." Moral education, we are rediscovering nowadays, concerns more than decision-making and the resolving of moral dilemmas. It involves cultivating virtues, habits of the hearts, but Christian character is character integrated around love for God. Meantime the unity of truth means understanding how everything we know is related to God, and declares his glories. So the *doxological* arises as a wholehearted response of love to all we know of Him and his creation, as well as the response of love to

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Him as our highest good. Formation, then, is the shaping of an integrated identity, that draws all aspects of the person and his life into relationship with God— the understanding and the moral life, as well as spirituality itself. It means making Jesus Lord of all.

Look at this in context. The church's first known involvement in higher education was presumably in Alexandria in the second and third centuries, where, in conjunction with the catechetical school, Origen developed a Christian alternative to the gnostic schools of religious thought that existed then. It was a place of intellectual inquiry for those who wanted to understand Christian beliefs; it provided a liberal education, as that was then understood, with strongly Platonist influence, as a propaedeutic for theology and Biblical interpretation. When Plato recorded Socrates' defense against the charge of corrupting Athenian youth—"I did nothing but go about persuading them first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul"—he was voicing his own central concern: the soul's improvement is the purpose of politics (he criticizes Pericles accordingly) and the responsibility of poets (he criticizes Homer), and the educational proposals of the *Republic* are to that end. His theory of forms, the art of dialectic and his later cosmology are all introduced in support of this concern about the soul's pursuit of the good. Now Origen, like Clement of Alexandria before him, construed Plato's Good as the Christian God, Plato's *eros* (love) for the Good becomes love for God, imitating the form of the Good becomes the imitation of God, and the unity of all forms by the Good becomes the unity of truth in the divine Logos. So they talked of "gathering" fragments of truth from pagan sources so as to reunite them to the truth as a whole from which they had been torn. For it is the divine Logos, Jesus Christ, by whom and for whom all things were made.

Augustine developed this more clearly. Since God is the highest good, love for God is the highest virtue that undergirds the entire moral life. But the human soul is disoriented, torn between higher and lower loves, its desires misdirected, until love for God reorients it aright. At the same time Augustine, too, insists that all truth is from God, so that like the Israelites of old we may plunder the Egyptians of their treasures of wisdom and knowledge, for these rightly belong to Christ and to Christians. So in *On Christian Doctrine* he surveys the contribution of liberal learning to understanding Scripture, and his *Confessions* are punctuated with outbursts of prayer and praise as he reflects on his own quest for truth. God is Truth as well as the Good, so we love Truth as well as Goodness in loving God. Virtue is the ordering of the soul in harmony with that truth. So Augustine advocates a two-fold discipline for youth, one to guide the life (moral development) and the other to guide their studies (intellectual development), so that God may become the object of their desires (moral) and thoughts (intellectual), and so of their full worship.

A similar picture emerges with Anselm in his monastery school. Contemplating truth and seeing its unity lifts the soul to the contemplation of God, and so Anselm's writings, too, erupt in doxologies. In the medieval university, philosophy was not only *ancilla theologiae*, but it also nourished the soul: it can show how everything in creation bears witness to its maker by fulfilling a God-given function, so that we join the entire choir of heaven and earth in raising one magnificent paean of praise to our maker.

The three emphases are thus constantly interrelated: teaching as formation that nurtures moral development and reveals the unity of truth, also elicits doxology in love for God. George Marsden, in his recent work *The Soul of the American University*, observes these emphases in Puritan colleges, and in the nineteenth century a capstone course in Moral Philosophy served at least two of them: the development of morally responsible citizens and the integration of knowledge. The teaching of science, Marsden observes, still emphasized the wisdom and power of the Creator. But, as he makes plain, the religious neutrality of Enlightenment thought tended to exclude Christian perspectives and, combined with the growth of specialization, it obscured the unity of truth. Empiricist approaches to ethics separated fact from value, denuding life of any intrinsic moral goods, and so gave rise to the relativism that our generation has now politicized. If God is dead, *we* must give value to the world. And the doxological? Even in church-related colleges, it is often marginalized in optional chapels rather than being the culminating expression of intellectual and moral development it once was.

My point is simply this: teaching as formation needs to be holistic—the integrated improvement of the soul intellectually and morally as well as the spiritual life of faith. Faith is an ultimate concern, life-integrating, fundamental to everything we are and do.

What then about teaching, if the intellectual is so intertwined with the religious? First of all, keep in mind where students are developmentally when they come to us. Erikson would call them either diffused (un-integrated) or foreclosed (pseudo-integrated) with regards to personal identity, while William Perry finds them often dualistic, compartmentalized, black and white thinkers, if they are not already at the relativistic stage. Erikson's goal for them is the achievement of integrated identity through commitment, Perry's that they move beyond dualism and rela-

tivism to commitment. They need to make beliefs and values their own, critically exploring alternatives in the process; or, as Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks both put it, we must educate the imagination to see possibilities not yet grasped. Our students need to see how everything can come together in relation to God, their liberal learning, their values, their entire lives. They need to understand how world views compete for their attention not only in their studies but in practical concerns of life. They need to reach conclusions and make commitments for themselves.

So consider with me three hypothetical college teachers, René, Freda and Martin. Which of them would you recommend as teaching for integrative formation? Let me introduce René first. He speaks with a French accent, and I am told he insists on a thorough clarity of thinking and is satisfied with nothing less than mathematical certainty in arguments. He takes nothing "on faith," but tells people to withhold judgment if there is any possible doubt. This certainly makes students think about alternatives, but everything is either black or white, right or wrong, and until you can prove the one or the other you have to withhold judgment. He sticks rigidly to his course syllabus, and never deviates to pursue the ethical or religious implications of a topic. His high expectations challenge students to do their best, and his disciples among them make a game of debating critical issues with detached, dispassionate logic. This is René. How do you think he contributes to those who doubt, or to the dualists in his classes, or those who are already foreclosed? What is he likely to contribute to their pilgrimage of the soul?

Freda, our second professor, has an accent, too: she is from Germany. Freda seems the antithesis of René, whom she ridicules: the very idea of objective certainty is ludicrous. The male can play his rationalist games if he must, but people don't decide what to live and fight for that way. So Freda rejects "linear reasoning" for a more relational kind of feminist approach. "Truth," she says, "is a woman." You can't approach it cold, unimpassioned and detached. Knowledge is a social construct, something we create, we make it true. So it is relative to the group, and there's no way of rationally settling disputes between different points of view. It's all a power struggle: the basic question is not whether what you hold is independently true but whether you are strong enough to make it stick. So everybody knows what Freda thinks on politics nationally and on campus issues, for in the classroom she intimidates the opposition and recruits students for her own causes. Her syllabus is a springboard for starting the course, not an agenda to follow. How effectively do you think Freda nurtures the soul intellectually? . . . morally? . . . spiritually?

And what about Martin? Ever since graduate school days he has questioned René's scholastic kind of approach. In most of our earthly affairs, he grants, the light of reason is enough: but in religious matters it falls short. Martin struggled for years with his own religious doubts before finally coming to the kind of commitment for which he is now so well known on campus. "Here I stand," he tells his students. "I can do no other." He has learned to live with the lack of logical certainty that René demands, without giving up on all reasoned inquiry as Freda often seems to have done. He had to work through a lot of questions himself, so he encourages students to do the same. He even builds into his courses at appropriate junctures issues he knows they are wrestling with. He spends time talking with them individually about their problems and struggles, and at commencement he has been seen to wipe the moisture from his eyes. He cares.

I've given enough clues in these brief profiles that you see now the game I am playing. Education is a developmental process, so the question is: who of these three teachers best contributes to nurturing a Christian understanding of the unity of truth (*i.e.*, a world view), to developing the values that can give life its proper focus, a love for God that pulls us together in thankful trust? Is it *René*, who embodies the tradition of René Descartes in insisting that the only knowledge worthy of the name is that whose logical and scientific basis excludes all doubt? Or is it *Freda*, who oddly reincarnates that male chauvinist, Friedrich Nietzsche, cynical about the role of reason and politicizing issues instead? Or is it *Martin*, named after Luther, of course, who doubted that reason alone can establish belief but whose faith still passionately seeks to understand? Who might best develop the imagination? . . . or provide the right degree of cognitive dissonance in a supportive context to elicit constructive growth?

In a day when, as Alan Bloom put it in *The Closing of the American Mind*, students talk as if there is no such thing as truth or falsity, right or wrong, and when the quest for truth is replaced with a will o' the wisp called fulfillment, or else just jobs, there is something refreshing about René's insistence on knowing whether a belief is true. Truth is, after all, independent of what we think about it: without it there would be, as Shakespeare said, "no hinge or loop to hang a doubt on" (*Othello*, III, iii, 366,) or even a hope, let alone truth to trust and build one's life on. But René creates exaggerated rational expectations, and his suspended judgment is not the real doubt that students wrestle with in their own development. It is more a training exercise than an existential experience. (I recognize that Descartes' theory of passions leads him to "instrumental reasoning" in ethics. But even there the mind remains at a distance from the life-world, disengaged, almost sans passion—like my René.) On the other hand, I sympathize with Freda, both the social concerns that egg her on and her criticism of

René. Plainly we are at root relational beings, and are formed in measure by the communities of which we are part: no one is an island. But if René overplays the role of reason, she underplays it: truth is not her concern, let alone the unity of truth. Her students remain adrift in a pluralistic sea, unless they become committed to some passing cause. But even then, will such a cause be sufficient to capture the soul's love or shape the character or integrate their learning? So what about Martin? He identifies more readily with student struggles:

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind.
He faced the specters of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own. . . .

Those lines from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* could well have been written about Luther himself, and Augustine, and others. It's what I want for my students, too. Martin models that kind of a commitment, as he occasionally tells his students what it is he believes, and why.

But have you noticed how Perry's three stages match our triumvirate? René comes across as a satisfied dualist, knowing for sure all the answers (at least those that can be proven). Freda goes beyond, to a more relativist stage, while Martin, of course, finds identity in critical and holistic commitment. You might also try matching them with Alasdair MacIntyre's *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry;* the Enlightenment encyclopaedist who thinks all knowledge is religiously neutral, objectively demonstrable,and universally acceptable; Nietzsche, who takes reasoning to be a power tool of use only in power plays; and then Aquinas rather than Luther. But my point is that teaching as formation should avoid the extremes of both Enlightenment rationalism and the relativist postmodern stance. *How,* as well as *what,* the teacher believes and values affects the development of student—as any observant teacher knows. *How* we teach affects the development of what since Aristotle have been called "intellectual virtues." I'm thinking of qualities like intellectual honesty, conscientiousness in looking at evidence, fair representation of sources and viewpoints, wisdom in making judgments, and prudence that considers both ends and means. In these and other regards, the mind is being shaped, the character is being formed, even *moral* character, for honesty, conscientiousness, fairness, prudence and modesty are moral virtues, too. Yet college students will easily remain just fact-collectors, develop intellectual arrogance, jump to conclusions, read too selectively, or even fudge evidence, if we let them. Our own insensitivity in these matters gives them license. *How* we teach is important, how we reveal our own beliefs, whether and how we engage in advocacy in the classroom, how we handle their questions and struggles, how we show that we care.

So far, then, two main points: first, the historical point that intellectual, religious and moral development were interrelated in student formation; second, the pedagogical point that teaching as formation will take a more dialogical, confessional, caring approach, rather than either claiming the certainties of a rationalist or disclaiming them with the cynicism of a relativist. I call it "confessional," being up front about my faith, my unresolved problems, my own commitments—and this while giving careful and honest attention to other viewpoints and other sides of an issue. If I play devil's advocate to ensure that my students face realistically some position I or they may reject, then it also makes sense at times to advocate a view of one's own in some appropriately modest way, while inviting reactions and admitting problems. So I suggest "true confessions" by the teacher about where she stands and why, wherever it naturally arises in context in either classroom or office. Our actual values show in our attitude to learning and to students, in how we regard ethical issues and the social applications of learning. If faith commitments and moral commitments play a role in our thinking, then both honesty and pedagogy require that we be open about where and in what ways this occurs.

It follows, I think, that we are obligated, particularly teaching in church-related colleges as we do, in a pluralistic culture as ours is, with students confused by conflicting options and their own ambivalencies, to show how alternative world views affect the regnant presuppositions, methods and theories in our disciplines, to suggest Christian perspectives on issues, and say how an overall Christian world view points to the unity of truth and so gives both direction and context to all our thinking. Consistency and intellectual honesty require it. A professor, after all, professes what he thinks. And the Christian college professor represents a community and its heritage. We speak not only for ourselves but for the long and worthy tradition of Christian higher education, Christian thought, Christian ethics and Christian faith.

Students who come to our colleges are, for the time being at least, auditing a community, drawing on a heritage, becoming part of a tradition. And it is by participation in both the thought and the life of communities and opening ourselves to their heritage that we assimilate beliefs and values and define our own identities. So representing and practicing community with integrity is a large part of formation—co-curricular as well as curricular activities contribute, as do traditions and ceremonies that build memories and become powerful symbols, along with student activities and service projects. We need to build bridges between the academic and student life that foster

the attitudes and habits we desire. Service-learning opportunities are one way of doing this. And what does the doxological element, in its relation to the unity of truth, suggest about the role and the content of college chapel and the role of the chaplain? But teachers have most contact with individual students in an advising role. Here, too, beliefs and values come into play, and here, too, caring counts.

I'm not satisfied with the term "advising": it seems to confine what we do to formal roles in preregistration and the like. So consider what we do as mentoring: helping the student think through what she's learning or helping her define educational goals in relation to her personal development; identifying personal strengths she could build on and weaknesses she needs to overcome; envisioning career and service outcomes; listening to and offering feedback about problems she is encountering—problems with her faith, relationship problems, moral and spiritual struggles— and keeping all this and more related to the formation of faith and character in a lasting personal identity. And we need advisory programs in our departments to track their development.

We will encourage character formation by encouraging her to watch her attitudes, to examine her values when facing decisions, to imagine who she could become in comparison to who she presently is, and in everything to be responsible. It's easy for young people—for all of us—to mouth ideas while behaving in thoughtless ways, but good character means accepting responsibility for one's actions. It means looking before you leap, acting reflectively rather than haphazardly, and freely rather than under peer pressure. It means taking responsibility not only for myself, but for other people, too: being helpful. We should encourage responsibility not only in studies but in service projects: both should be carefully planned, thoroughly prepared, regularly carried out, honestly critiqued and improved. We must tell students to nurture good habits of the heart: virtue is just such a habit, a settled disposition rooted in the conscious decision to be a certain kind of person. I have sometimes asked a student, "Have you thought what sort of a person you are becoming . . . ?" Or "What kind of recommendations will I be able to write for you?" Cultivating character takes this kind of nurture that a teacher can sometimes help provide. In the process we do well to draw on the resources of our particular Christian traditions for spiritual and moral formation, to point students to the means of grace, and to encourage spiritual disciplines. Mentoring can involve all of this.

Recently I ran across a list of five characteristics of a good mentor:

1. The mentor takes time for a one-on-one conversation on any issue at hand.
2. The mentor doesn't smother the student with answers, doesn't spare her the struggle.
3. The mentor admits not having all the answers.
4. The mentor listens a lot, asks questions, points new directions.
5. The mentor models an integral relation between learning and all of life.

The potential of teaching for formation was brought home to me in a powerful way this spring when, on retiring from 43 years of teaching at Wheaton, I received two thick binders of letters (141 of them) from former students, many of them deeply touching, for I remembered some of their struggles. With others I never knew, and wish I had, what they were going through. I read through one volume late that night through many tears; the other volume had to wait . . . until 6 the next morning. More recently I went through them more carefully to try and identify whatever it was they perceived I had done, often unwittingly, that contributed to their development, things which might be an encouragement to other teachers. Here is something of what they said:

On intellectual development:

• You opened our minds to the magnitude of a question. • You did not dodge tough questions but honestly confronted difficult issues while maintaining a Christian orientation.• You were the unprideful Socrates, without the taint of pride or dogmatism or even impatience that so often creeps into men or women of erudition. • No matter what topic was under discussion, you treated it justly and with care.
• You personified what it means to think critically to interpret charitably and to discuss ideas graciously.
•You led me to an intellectual humility I have never forgotten.• You encouraged me to aim as high as I could. I saw a man in whom dedication to the truth was really worship. • You gave me the gift of learning to think as a Christian.

On relationships with students:

• You never turned me away from your office door. Instead you would put aside whatever you were working on and focus your undivided attention on whatever my problem happened to be. • [A student whose sister was killed in a car accident]: I will always remember with gratefulness how you took several hours to talk with me. I remember sitting in your office until 7 or 8 p.m., but you didn't show any sign of being too busy or preoccupied to deal with me. It is for your humanness and openness and compassion during that trying time that I will always remember you. • My college years were primarily a time of struggling and soul-searching. I want to thank you for your acceptance of my intense inner life, which nurtured me and gave me space to heal and grow. • When Dr. W's little child was battling leukemia, you filled in for him, but offered a prayer for

the child, and were unable to continue. One of us picked up the prayer and finished it. That meant something to me. • Early one morning in your home, you (my professor) served me a bowl of oatmeal. For me, a Korean, it was like having my feet washed . . . It may seem odd that a student thank his professor for being his servant. But of course Jesus did turn the world upside down.

And then faith formation:

• During my student days, I abandoned Christianity . . . . As this became clear in my papers, you engaged me in scholarly and kindly dialogue. Before graduation you advised me "not to throw out the baby with the bath water" . . . It took me 20 years to return to Christ. Today, as a seminary student I have a model for my work. • [One man was so distanced from his parents that for a while he found he could not even pray "Our Father, who art in Heaven." But on a graduation picture he noticed my head in the background, and he found he could pray, "Our Teacher, who art in heaven. . . .] You showed me that God is bigger than our questions. • Your life was a model of faithfully using your God-given gifts in your daily work. • You gave me an understanding of what it meant to have a calling, to understand one's life as strategically invested for the kingdom of God.

I was amazed, humbled, floored at all this sort of thing. Of course, for the 140 or so who wrote, there were several hundred more who didn't. Maybe they had another story, parts of which I am more aware of because I'm closer to the negatives in me than I allow others to be. Yet willy-nilly, whether we know it or not, for better or for worse, we *are* mentoring our students. Our teaching *is* forming their minds, forming their values, forming their faith. Teaching is formation. And in this, too, we can join the doxology of the ages. ❑

Tore Up Good

In the song, he's lamenting a landscape
returned to, the tract houses thrown up
in a summer, plywood and cheap studs,
the fewest possible nails hammered in.
Saws whine like hornets with no nest

in sight. The meadow of timothy gone,
trees gone, the creek that sparkled clear down
to crawdads gone and gone. Till it rings
like a bell and you shake your head.
So it is with the heart's landscape, too.

Why catalogue the beauty of one April, one
this or that or the other? The flying free,
the side-by-side cockpit work that meant
you worked together like a team?
And first kisses, dinners, flowers—all

rummage now. What one blind soul holds up
for care, the other pitches out for curb-
side pickup on Monday. And you like
to think in ten years' time, oh yeah,
it'll be found in some dusty bin at some flea

market. Snapped up, treasured in a hail
of dust, but oh so faded and so late.

Patricia Clark

SOLI DEO GLORIA: THE DOXOLOGICAL TASKS OF THE CHURCH COLLEGE

Ernest L. Simmons, Jr.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!
I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God
while I have being.

Psalm 146:1-2

The world as we have known it is coming to an end. With the end of the Cold War and the biting critiques of Post-Enlightenment rationalism, many of the political and intellectual forces that have given society its dominating meaning are collapsing. Received definitions and identities no longer speak with the same clarity and eloquence they once did.

So it is for both the college and the church. How are these institutions to identify themselves in the emerging post-modern world? My question in this essay is, "What is the role of the colleges and seminaries in the mission of the church?" Behind such a question lies nothing less than the identity of our institutions and the continued engagement of the Christian tradition with contemporary life and thought. I do not pretend to have the answers to all these questions. Mine is a partial and preliminary formulation of the question, intended to assist in the shaping process of our reflection. It is not intended to determine its outcome but rather facilitate reflection.

My initial answer to the question of the role of the colleges in the mission of the church centers on informed Christian reflection on the nature of the world, in preparation for wider service in society. Indeed, scholarly study and teaching, understood as spiritual activity, is an expression of doxology, of praise to God for the beauty, complexity and beneficence of the creation itself. My thesis then is: A college of the church has as its central mission doxology, understood as reflective praise through the sustaining of the conversation between the Christian tradition and contemporary life in its manifold complexity. Joseph Sittler once said that "The Church is engaged in the task of education because it is dedicated to the truth" (27). Doxology for an academic institution is most clearly expressed in the pursuit of truth. Since truth is the highest form of doxology for the intellectual life of the spirit, the church has an interest in and commitment to the truth as it bears witness to its Lord.

Martin Marty observed several years ago that it is difficult to read the Zeitgeist and to discern the difference between "intrinsic relevance" and "imposed relevance." Intrinsic relevance is born out of a commitment to certain truths or values while imposed relevance calls for a response occasioned by the events and ethos of the day. I believe that this insight about two forms of relevance translates over into two types of tasks for a doxological vision, both a conservative and a constructive task. The conservative task speaks to the intrinsic relevance of the vision of truth embraced by the Christian tradition. The constructive task emerges as the colleges encounter the wider society. It responds, if you will, to "imposed relevance," the agenda set by the wider culture and not directly by the college or the church. I would like then, to order my remarks around two headings: first of all a doxological **vision** for Lutheran higher education, and second, a twofold doxological **task**. I will order the twofold task around four critical dimensions of Lutheran higher education: Academic Freedom, Christian Presence, Lutheran Identity and Vocational Service.

Part I. A Doxological Vision

In order to address the role of the colleges in the mission of the church we must begin by understanding that the present social and ecological crises of Western culture are fundamentally spiritual and not material struggles. The

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present quest for spiritual direction is real. Nothing less than human survival is at stake. From Bellah to Al Gore, authors affirm the spiritual and moral character of our contemporary crises. Vice President Gore observes,

> The more deeply I search for the roots of the global environmental crisis, the more I am convinced that it is an outer manifestation of an inner crisis that is, for lack of a better word, spiritual....But what other word describes the collection of values and assumptions that determine our basic understanding of how we fit into the universe? (12)

We are in the midst of the formation of a new global socio-economic order the form of which is still unclear. The enormous economic disparities in the world, especially between the North and the South, raise serious issues of distributive justice. The exploitive attitude towards a purely material environment places the planet and ecosystem itself at risk. All of us, willingly or not, are engaged in, to borrow the Native American phrase, a spiritual "vision quest" by means of which to inform social meaning and foster human survival.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition the fundamental purpose of human existence is doxology, to live is to worship God through praise. Human beings are created to give praise to God their Creator. Of the humus, the soil, indeed we are spirit-breathed humus, we are humus become self-conscious and in so being we image God within the creation. We are a form of incarnation where the spiritual is made manifest in the material. There is then an intrinsic connection between doxology and humanity such that any study of the *humanum* can be an exercise in praise of the Creator who made the *humanum* possible in the first place. Such a sutained study of the *humanum* is the purpose of a liberal arts college of the church.

This interdependent connection between humanity and the natural world also has resulted in our time in a renewed understanding of the unity of nature and history. From the beginning of the Enlightenment through the middle of the twentieth century it was common to speak of a separation between nature and history. Nature, as object, had no intrinsic development but was rather to be understood through scientific analysis in a value-free inquiry where both natural and human purpose were considered to be irrelevant. History, on the other hand, was the realm of human purpose in which civilization rose and fell and human beings charted their course in dominating an impersonal world. This is a false duality, for it has never been the case that these two were separable. History would not exist without nature and nature itself has a history. In reality, many civilizations have fallen because of the environmental destruction they inflicted on their environment. Also, humanity has always connected history to nature through technology and its impact upon the surrounding environment. As Reinhold Niebuhr saw, that which, in the organic world is the will to survive becomes in the human world the will to power. Theologian Langdon Gilkey points out that one of the most effective means of expression of this will to power is through technology (10). Today we see this with a clarity unprecedented in human reflection and with such reflection comes an increased reponsibility to properly steward such a relation, in effect, to reclaim "nature" as a "creation."

The intrinsic connection between nature and history also has ramifications for the understanding of doxology. Not only does the study of the humanities and social sciences give praise to God but so do the natural sciences. A doxological vision is a holistic vision, searching for truth wherever in the created world it might be found. From a theological perspective, we perceive a connection between law and grace. The regularity in the natural world lends itself to the formation of natural laws, but there is also contingency, spontaneity and novelty—qualities not easily circumscribed by covering law theories. Such surprise and complexity become the rule rather than exception in the world of human social history. This is to say that both nature and history bespeak a dialectical interaction between regularity and novelty, determinism and indeterminism and even judgment and forgiveness. Thus doxological reflection on creation must be seen as both dynamic and dialectical.

While the creation is good, all that has happened within it is not good. The distortion of the good, the curving in upon the self, the separation from the source of one's existence, the exploiting of the other, both human and non-human, is understood in the Christian tradition as sin. The trinitarian confession is that the God who has made this creation possible has entered into it to restore it to its original intention and to reconcile it to God. As Jurgen Moltmann so clearly states it, "To recognize God in the Crucified Christ means to grasp the trinitarian history of God, and to understand oneself and this whole world with Auschwitz and Vietnam, with race-hatred and hunger, as existing in the history of God. God is not dead, death is in God" (18). That which made the creation possible enters into that very creation and continues to sustain it. The creation is a continuing creation, a *creatio continua*, sustained by God's spirit. The creational dialectic of law and grace, of Law and Gospel, impacts on the incarnational reality of God. No part of the creation remains separated from spiritual presence and therefore from being seen with integrity and value. It is here that hope is born within the Christian tradition, since the Incarnation offers a way of being in the world. Hope is the ground of future possibility. In the light of what might be, one is empowered to change what is. Colleges of the church have then as part of their doxological mission the imparting of such a way of being and of hope, not by coercion but by example.

In summary, the message of the Gospel can be seen as

a valid response to contemporary human struggles exactly because those struggles are fundamentally spiritual. A theology of the cross which understands God in the midst of suffering can name the situation for what it is, even as it offers hope in light of its critique. The colleges of the church are places where this dialectic can be addressed and communicated across many different disciplinary lines. By preparing students for Christian vocation, the church college engages in doxological study of the creation for the purpose of equipping the priesthood of all believers. The fundamental purpose of Christian education for Luther was both the preserving of this evangelical message and the equipping of the priesthood of all believers for service in the church and the world. Therefore, to the extent that colleges of the church engage in equipping that priesthood for the exercise of their Christian vocation, they are engaging in and effecting part of the mission of the church. The colleges are able to do this through the bringing together of the doxological study of the creation in the context of the Law/Gospel dialectic for vocational preparation. The dialectic helps to clarify the spiritual dimensions of our common problems and offers direction for possible solutions. The colleges' task then is not primarily proclamation but education done in the context of the Law/Gospel dialectic of a doxological study of creation.

Part II. The Twofold Doxological Task

After this brief overview of a doxological vision for college education let us turn to the two-fold doxological task. The conservative task has principally to do with holding and affirming traditions essential to the nature of the college as a college of the church. It focuses on that "intrinsic relevance" referred to earlier. The constructive task involves coming to grips with contemporary life and thought as they impact upon both the church and the college, the "imposed relevance" that Marty referred to.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is essential to the pursuit of the truth and the life of the mind. Without such freedom intellectual life can fall victim to an imposed ideology and the constraints of pragmatic interests. It is also an essential for the cultivation of the liberal arts. Within the Lutheran tradition academic freedom is understood as an academic application of the doctrine of the two kingdoms, the distinction between the world of today and the world to come in regard to God's governance. In the world of today reason dominates as the means to study the order God has placed in creation, each discipline with its own integrity and freedom. As David Lotz observes,

> For present purposes it is especially germaine to add that Luther not only appreciated the internal integrity of the academic disciplines, but no less recognized and underscored their technical autonomy. In a word, he defended academic freedom: the right of each discipline to pursue its specific goals, with its own appropriatemethods and conceptual categories, without meddling or interference from other disciplines, including Christian theology. (Lotz, 11)

Luther himself asserts,

> No science should stand in the way of another science, but each should continue to have is own mode of procedure and its own terms. Every science should make use of its own terminology, and one should not for this reason condemn the other or ridicule it; but one should rather be of use to the other, and they should put their achievements at one another's disposal. (quoted in Lotz, see also Quanbeck)

The integrity of creation requires nothing less than the integrity and freedom of disciplines devoted to its study. Only in this way can a healthy and constructive dialectical relationship between the two kingdoms be maintained, allowing for the doxological pursuit of truth. What is sought here is not a "Christian biology" or "Christian physics" but rather a dynamic interrelationship between biology, physics—or any discipline— and the Christian faith. One discipline does not dictate to another, but seeks a relationship of mutual respect and integrity. Academic freedom must be conserved in order to maintain the critical task of understanding life in this world. On the other hand, as contemporary epistemological critiques have shown, perspectiveless or neutral frameworks of meaning and interpretation do not exist, even in the public university. Therefore it is not a violation of academic freedom or integrity for a college of the church to attempt to bring scholarly reflection into relationship with Christian perspectives. In fact, such is its constructive task.

Over the last twenty-five to thirty years we have developed an awareness of the limits of Enlightenment reflection and the Cartesian/Newtonian paradigm for thought. The belief that one could construct or derive a purely objective, neutral, bias free and rational perspective on any subject of discourse is now coming to be seen as a dream forged in the myth of an ahistorical reality. All thought is contextual and therefore all facts are value laden. Facts are contextual truths which arise precisely through a framework of interpretation allowing raw data to be connected for the construction of meaning. This does not mean that there is no truth but only that the true, like the real, is always encountered from and defined by a particular perspective. To suspend belief in order to understand is now seen as an impossible task, "foundationalism" as Richard Rorty refers to it (Schwehn, 23-25) or "objectivism" as Parker Palmer calls it. Palmer describes objectivism as "assuming a sharp distinction between the knower and the

objects to be known. These objects exist 'out there', apart from and independent of the knower" (27). This separation between the knower and the known has fallen under radical critique in our day. Philosophers, initially from the philosophy of science, argue that no rigid distinction can be made between the two and that every scientific finding is a mixture of both subjective and objective elements. The task now is not to deny perspective and context in thought but to become more inclusively aware of what actually informs one's thought. Palmer's indictment of objectivism stems from his insight that epistemologies have moral trajectories, that ways of knowing are not morally neutral but morally directive. He sees learning as a communal exercise where knowing is a spiritual form of relationship ultimately bound together by love (Schwehn, 25-26).

For academic freedom, the implications are, at the least, that the attempt to connect one's religious faith to other realms of learning is a meaningful activity. There is always some faith position present, even if it is faith in reason alone. Academic freedom does not mean absolute neutrality in learning and reflection but rather the free and open debate and dialog between various perspectives of learning, and between the various personal and social contexts in which knowing takes place. Academic freedom assures an open playing field, not that there are no teams on the field. Christian scholars, then, need not apologize for their Christianity any more than should a Buddhist, Jewish, Islamic or a secular scholar. Secularism is only one alternative belief structure for the construction and interpretation of reality. It is not the only one. As George Marsden, among others, has pointed out, there is no value-free inquiry anywhere, including the university, and so just as other voices need to be brought to bear in scholarly discourse, so too should the Christian voice be a member of the conversation (38-40). This is not to make an intellectual sacrifice but to acknowledge one's basis of existence as essential to one's thought.

In all the discussions of the limits of the Enlightenment we must also be careful not to give up its great contributions to Western culture, including the role of reason in formulating more generally held attributes of analysis and understanding. We must not allow a critique of rationalism to allow us to fall back into an abyss of irrationalism. Granting the contextuality of thought does not of itself preclude the possibility of some commonly shared principles of understanding and conduct across contextual lines, otherwise social order and democracy as we know it become impossible. In theory then the postmodern critique affirms academic freedom while at the same time permitting the legitimate introduction of other perspectives, including the religious. This development is a direct result of the emergence of pluralism to which I will now turn in relation to Christian presence and the mission of the church.

2. Christian Presence

As colleges of the church, our institutions should assure that there will be a Christian presence, a Christian voice, in the intellectual conversation on campus. Such is the essence of the conserving task in this regard. Yes, this is to privilege one perspective, not by giving it the final word but only by assuring that it will be present in the discussion. This faith/learning dialog then would occur especially in the classroom, where Christian thought is brought into relationship with every discipline on campus in whatever manner is appropriate to the discipline. There it should be critiqued and evaluated for its value and truthfulness as is any perspective on life and thought.

This is one of the most important services that colleges can render to the church, to sustain its faith tradition in dynamic interrelationship with contemporary life and thought. As Robert Jenson observes, "A college of the church will try to be for its students and faculty a true public realm, a community of discourse and virtue, even as around it such realms collapse" (28). To see all life and thought within the context of God's law and governence can provide a basis for holistic integration at a time in society when fragmentation is the norm. This is not to dictate to the wider society but to assist individuals, our students and ourselves, in seeing that "in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17).

The model here supported is that of a "Free Christian College" in the old Danforth Foundation typology where there is an open and free exchange of perspectives, not the "Defender of the Faith" model where free discussion is prevented by forced doctrinal subscription. Without recapitulating all that has been said about pluralism, I would like to draw on some insights from Ted Peters, as he distinguishes "descriptive pluralism" from "dogmatic or radical pluralism" (38-39). Descriptive pluralism Peters defines as ". . . the side-by-side existence of various and contradictory perspectives, worldviews, or approaches to human understanding and living. . . . Descriptive pluralism describes the situation in which we find ourselves" (39). Dogmatic pluralism, on the other hand, is prescriptive pluralism because it consists ". . .of a positive affirmation of pluralism as a way of viewing reality that dictates conceptual and ethical commitments. It holds that variety and diversity are positive goods and that the denial of variety and diversity is bad" (39). The traditional American motto *E Pluribus Unum* reminds us that the concerns of pluralism are not new, but rather reflect an old commitment to be the embodiment of a peaceable pluralism. What is new is the recognition of the required participation of the voices of the other into our cultural and intellectual conversation. Our enriched experience is much preferred to the hegemonistic political and intellectual oppression of former times. This is the positive value of descriptive pluralism, made possible to a

large extent by the Enlightenment emphases upon reason and toleration as grounding principles for social and intellectual life.

Peters, (and, incidentally, James Davison Hunter in his book *Culture Wars)* makes the point that pluralism in its other, dogmatic, form is taking on additional turns today which may preclude critical appraisal and moral formation. Pushed to its extreme, Peters writes,

> radical pluralism so embraces cultural relativism that no universal value regarding 'the good' or vision of what fulfills human aspiration can be mounted. Radical pluralism so affirms the integrity of a given perspective that any attempt to change is considered a cultural violation. (40)

The question raised here is whether this radical form of pluralism can be coherent as a value system without commitment to some form of universal humanity? In fact, radical plurialism actually may threaten the ongoing possiblity of rational discourse. Dogmatically affirmed, radical plurality separates and forces each speaker into a form of solipsistic cultural contextualism where no critique or affirmation from without is permitted. In such a context intellectual life comes to a halt because unbridgeable separation between human groups is maintained to the denial of any *humanum.* The issue here then is not whether there will be pluralism, but rather, pluralism of which form. The collapse of radical pluralism into the abyss of ethical solipsism I believe indicates its limited utility for human social understanding and therefore it should be rejected.

Theologically the mission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel and bear witness to her Lord through both word and deed. Precisely how that is to be done today in a pluralistic setting is one of the most critical challenges to the church and one which directly impacts how colleges can be involved in such mission. The decline in membership of mainline Protestant denominations over the last 20-30 years is clearly documented. What is less clear, and the subject of much scrutiny and debate, are the causes for such decline. Loren Meade, president of the Alban Institute in Washington D.C., in his book *The Once and Future Church,* argues that we are in the midst of a major paradigm shift in the mission of the church. We have moved from an "apostolic paradigm" where the mission field was the front door of the church to the "Christendom paradigm" where the mission field is the frontier of the empire. Meade believes we have been in the breakdown of the Christendom paradigm for sometime now, perhaps since the beginning of the Reformation. Confusion about the proper location of the mission field of the church is one indicator, as is the shift in support given to national and international structures most of which were founded to support a different paradigm of mission. Meade believes that it will take several generations to formulate the new paradigm but he sees signs of it all around, where, for example, congregations take upon themselves to address such local needs as daycare, homelessness, racism, and domestic violence. The mission field is not only the front street, but also the front pew, where inreach to support suffering members is a critical ministry. Colleges of the church can help the church formulate a new paradigm of mission precisely by giving to the church thoughtful reflection on the character and forces at work in the world.

3. Lutheran Identity

The issue of Lutheran identity may be the most difficult one for which to chart a clear and fair direction. On the one hand, it is evident from research that Marsden, Burtchaell, Benne and others have conducted that the denominational identity of a college is lost when a significant number of both the faculty and student body no longer participate in the tradition. We have sister institutions in the ELCA where that is the case at the present time. For many of those schools "church affiliation" is a nice but not necessarily a defining descriptor of their life and mission. On the other hand, to dictate fidelity on the part of all faculty and students is to abandon the "Free Christian College" model discussed earlier. Such practice, even if not in theory, in reality can create a "Defender of the Faith" mentality and ethos on campus which works against free inquiry. I do not propose here to offer any simple way out of this tension; rather, I see the tension itself as part of the creative expression of the Lutheran tradition. Lutheranism, understood as an ecumenical and confessional movement within the church catholic, lives fundamentally in the dialectical tension between the poles of no church affiliation and denominational ideology. A complex embodiment of this tension involves faculty and student recruitment, campus worship, congregational ownership and synodical affiliation. No magic percentage of critical mass of students or faculty resolves this tension, for identity is not a possession but a process, a mode of being, a way of engaging in the interaction of one's faith with life. This may be done as effectively by a nonmember of the denomination as by a member. We need denominational diversity on campus not only to enrich our own understanding of the Christian tradition but also to keep Lutherans honest. We need reflective Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, and others, for they will probably do more for the effecting of Lutheran identity on campus than would a non-reflective Lutheran.

What is at stake here is the desire on the part of the institution to be related to a specific church. Above all else it is a matter of shared intentionality of common purpose. Does a college want to be related to a specific church? As Merrimon Cunningim, longtime president of the Danforth Foundation put it, the fundamental essential is this, "A college must want to be and aim to be so related" (quoted in Narum, 5 ref. fn. 14.) A college as a whole must want to be

so related to the church and its mission. As my colleague William Narum puts it,

> Two things are necessary: one, a conscious intention by the college to work for and under the college's relation to the church's mission, and two, a significant measure of congruence among the constituent groups of the college in their understanding of this intention. (5)

Such a shared purpose would not and should not end debate about the embodiment of this intentionality in any given instance, from faculty hiring to campus worship events, for example. But it does place these discussions in the context of mutual commitment and common purpose which are essential for maintaining identity and trust.

The identity of a faith community always evolves. It can never be frozen at a particular time or point of embodiment except at the peril of its own demise. The Shaker community is an excellent case study in this regard. Rather, identity comes through continuity of experience and the continually emergent narrative of life shared together. Common, mutually shared, purpose is the best way to provide for continuity of identity; thus, that identity must be everybody's business or become merely a nostalgic veneer preserved by anachronistic sentimentality. The Lutheran tradition in higher education by and large has not subscribed to such a narrow vision of education but rather to one of education for service in the world.

Lutheranism is more than a denomination; it is a confessional movement in the church catholic. It is a way of understanding the relation of God and the world characterized by justifying grace embraced through faith. In the Reformation, the clarificaiton of the nature of the Gospel proceeded through debate in the public arenas of the university and society. In this regard then the character of Lutheran identity began and, to remain vital, must continue to be sustained as a matter of public debate and dialog within the arena of contemporary intellectual and religious opinions. This is to say that "Lutheran liberal arts" is not an oxymoron but rather an essential statement of the arena in which the character of Lutheran identity is formulated and sustained. It is born of a dialectic between faith and life.

The constructive challenge for Lutheran identity on our campuses is to continue to maintain such an identity-forming dialectic. Today this dialectic moves between two extremes, both of which I contend should be avoided. On the one extreme is the pole of "No Affiliation," pushing religion completely out of the academy as if it were a contagion in academic life. The other pole is "Denominational Ideology," which seeks to preserve church affiliation by doctrinal imposition and the stifling of creative critique. For the Lutheran tradition both poles are false and unacceptable alternatives. To gravitate to no affiliation, especially today, flies in the face of the postmodern critique discussed earlier, since there is no academically neutral context for the discussion of ideas. The preferable model is to be self-conscious about one's perspective. On the other extreme, denominational identity has gone to seed when it can no longer creatively engage contemporary intellectual life. If preservation is the only objective, then it is better to acknowledge the demise of a denomination's viability and move on, rather than trying to retain it nostalically by bracketing out critical analysis. The church existed before there were denominations and it will exist after them .

Lutheran identity is forged between these two extremes, in the dialectical tension of what I would call "ecumenical confessionalism." Lutheran identity, if it is to be faithful to what gave it birth, must not simply collapse into denominational preservation nor sell out to some assumed superior position free of affiliation. Lutheranism, understood as ecumenical confessionalism, would resist both extremes. The "ecumenical" side would prevent denominational ideology by continually reminding the community of the value and presence of other denominational and theological emphases in the Christian tradition, thus affirming the sought-for diversity on our campuses. The "confessionalism" side would argue against the idea of no affiliation by affirming that in the intellectual arena it is preferable to be self-conscious about one's commitments, rather than assume that such discussion is value free. Self-conscious confessionalism on the part of Lutherans then frees up others to be self-conscious about their traditions as well. Confessionalism as a dynamic theological expression does not seek imposed doctrinal uniformity but rather a lively and healthy confessional dialog between traditions. The freedom of the gospel of God's justifying grace empowers faith for free inquiry. We are not saved by our intellectual or ideological constructions, and thus we are free to use them to pursue analysis of the world and search for truth wherever that search leads. That is the character of a doxological vision which affirms diversity within the overarching unity of God's creation. Born in the liberal arts setting for reflection on faith and life, Lutheran liberal arts can remain a vital force for sustaining such a dialog.

4. Vocational Service

Any institution totally preoccupied with itself and its own preservation courts its own destruction. Life reaches out, it gropes, it crawls, its meanders, for it is always seeking the new niche, the new area for development. Living individuals and institutions do likewise. I borrow the organic metaphors here because I believe that colleges are communitarian, living institutions, their life constituted by the cells of faculty, students, staff and constituents that maintain them. Outreach, service, vocational expression of life in the world in service to others are at the heart of the mission of colleges of the church. Today's world consists of competing and conflicting powers, in which struggle is a

daily experience. It is for this reason that Luther argued against leaving the world for the cloister, since to do so would be to abdicate one's calling to serve God against the forces of destruction present in the world. Vocation was Luther's way of embodying such a calling into the wider world. Vocation is for the earth and the world today so that, as Gustaf Wingren summarizes, "Human action is a medium for God's love to others" (180).

Luther did not have a dualistic conception of Christian life but rather a dialectical one. It is this dialectical movement which allowed him to see the action of God in the world even when this action is hidden behind the "masks" of God in creation. This dialectical tension allows the Christian to live both in the world of today and the world to come and to immerse him/herself in the life of this world through Christian freedom. Such is the power of faith in life. Colleges of the church must foster and sustain this vocational understanding of life, not only for their students but also for themselves. Colleges live for service; it is this identity, not mere preservation, that they must conserve and protect. To serve is to embody the doxological vision at the level of earthly need.

And campuses are needy places. Any of us who have been around the academy for awhile are aware that there have been changes in the background knowledge and learning styles of our students. Students continue to be intelligent and, for the most part, open to learning even if it is driven by occupational concerns. My sense, however, is that students do not know as much when they come to college now as they used to, particularly in the area of the humanities, such as knowledge of western cultural history or the biblical narrative. Research also indicates that most of them are concrete active learners with only about 10 percent being abstractive reflective ones, which is what most college faculty are (Schroeder, 24). As a teacher of religion I find myself doing more remediation in the Bibical and theological traditions than I used to, since many students find theorizing an extremely difficult task. When I have some students who think Moses was a disciple and Martin Luther was a civil rights leader, my educational agenda has been changed.

The liberal arts have historically been the repositories of meaning, identity and preparation for civic responsibility in the West. Those tasks are all the greater today as we seek to chart for both ourselves and our students a course through the bewildering matrix of cultural and educational debates. Do the liberal arts have a canon any longer? Or is "canon" a euphemism for cultural imperialism? If there is no canon of meaning, can there then be any acceptible standard of conduct or social interchange? Are public discourse and debate simply to be replaced by badgering, posturing and disinformation? Is political debate reduced to being a Larry King circus sideshow? Questions like these have led Robert Jenson to suggest that the mission of the church college is, ". . . .in the name of God to save our culture from itself" (26).

Such issues engage many communities in our society. They prompt Cornel West's *Race Matters* and its unexpectedly wide readership, as well as Stephen Carter's *The Culture of Disbelief.* In a culture of disbelief, Carter argues, God is treated as a "hobby," and anyone who attempts to take religion seriously in public life is treated as a fanatic (42-43). Colleges of the church have a real stake in this discussion, for here, perhaps, if nowhere else in our society, should religious beliefs be raised, discussed and critiqued in an informed manner that does not dismiss them as a hobby or label them as fanatical. To carry on such open reflection on religion is clearly one of the most important contributions colleges can make to the church's mission of enlightened understanding of the faith. In a culture where public discourse, especially about matters of religion, is not encouraged or even welcome, private institutions may offer the most effective venue for such deliberations. Our students, our society and our churches cannot thrive without such reflection.

In conclusion, perhaps it is because I have become middle aged, but hopefully for better reasons than that, I have become aware of the importance of conserving. To lose or forget one's past is not only to disconnect from the previous identity-forming process, but also to leave one contextless for the future. For human beings, narrative is the formative way in which we engage time. For institutions as well as individuals, this narrative gets preserved as tradition.

The church as well as the college exists only through the continuing instantiation of tradition as this breaks upon the crest of the wave of the present generation. To know who we are is to know from where we have come. We need to share what has formed us. We need a knowledge of our traditions as windows to reality, as means to allow us a home from which we can journey out and to which we can return. At its worst tradition can refuse change and court irrelevance, by retreating to some nostalgically perceived halcyon past, but at its best tradition gives perspective from which to engage the novel. The challenge for both the church and the college is to maintain tradition as a compass by which to approach the future and not a lock by which to close it out!

The doxological vision for Lutheran higher education that I have been developing would affirm meaning in the face of meaninglessness, understanding in the face of ignorance, hope in the face of despair and life in the face of death. Doxology is to give praise through both mind and heart as they meet in the word which is voiced forth in everything from music to mathematics. When colleges of the church engage in such praise through reasoned reflection and understanding, through scholarship understood as a spiritual endeavor, through witness to the finite dis-

closing the infinite, and through service in meeting the needs of one's neighbor and the wider creation, they participate creatively and constructively in the mission of the church. They equip the church constructively to engage the world, and in the words of Joseph Sittler, they serve "to complicate persons open."

Roland Bainton in his widely read biography of Luther, *Here I Stand,* observes that the only other German to fully understand Luther was Johann Sebastian Bach, who poured forth praise to God for justification by grace and the beauty of creation with theologically informed music. It became Bach's habit to sign off each work with the initial's "SDG," "Soli Deo Gloria" signifying for whom and through whom the inspiration of each work was accomplished. Such a signature implied a doxological vision of creation and redemption. It is my hope that we who serve in colleges of the church may do likewise, that all our lectures, papers, presentations, indeed our scholarly and community life itself, may be initialed with the "SDG." A hope that we may see our work in the context of a doxological vision like Bach so that in all things we too may say, "Soli Deo Gloria." ❑

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Groundhog Day, 1959

(after a painting by Andrew Wyeth)

The light is eggshell thin
but not tender, no love
in it. Outdoors or in,

only that thin light keeps
contained the rage he feels
at living alone. Stiff

as the dead, logs he dragged
from the woodlot wait for
splitting. A loop of chain,

a metal pull, dangle
from one. When he's sitting
at noon supper, he'll keep

his back to the window,
too much reminded how
he's circled and looped by

solitude. He lines up
plate, cup, knife, though the food
he eats tastes like cardboard,

and the hottest coffee
does not singe his thin mouth.
No joy for him in one

patch of pale lemon light
touching the wallpaper.
He can't see the shadows

growing from the stiff logs
but he wants, more than he
can say, six more weeks, six

again, and another
few, of winter—why not?—
anything to keep ground

frozen, to stop the great
flowering to come that
shows only what he lacks.

Patricia Clark

CONVERSION AND COMPROMISE IN THE EARLY ENGLISH REFORMATION:
WAS "LITTLE" BILNEY A PROTESTANT?

Thomas Holien

One of the most fascinating figures of the Early English Reformation, Thomas Bilney remains the subject of intermittent scholarly debate nearly half a millenium after his death in 1531. Indeed, in the last decade or so he has undergone something of a personality change; in two of the most recent articles written about him he has been labelled, "aggressive," and "tough-minded," in one, and called a "schemer" in the other. This of a man who for centuries was considered a "victim," an "innocent," and a "saint." While Bilney's personality is of course of interest to me, his personal faith and life experiences are more so, and they will be the focus of my remarks.

Thomas Bilney died for his faith on 19 August 1531 in the Lollards' Pit just outside the city of Norwich. The problem of defining the precise nature of that faith vexed contemporaries and still troubles modern historians. The humanist and hunter of heretics, Sir Thomas More, claimed Bilney for the Church. He wrote, "But yet was God so good and gracious lord unto him, that he finally so fully converted unto Christ and his true Catholic faith." John Foxe, the Protestant propagandist and dramatist angrily refused to allow More to "take-up this Thomas Bilney from us, and make him a convert after his sect." While Foxe grudgingly conceded that before his death Bilney had sought absolution and received the sacrament of the altar, he declared, "yet all this notwithstanding proveth not that he recanted." Foxe believed that Bilney perished in the flames estranged from the Church because he had renounced beliefs and practices it sanctioned; he summarized Bilney's heretical creed as a condemnation of "false trust in men's merits, and such other gross points of religion as seemed prejudicial and derogatory to the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ."

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Scholars have differed widely in their interpretations of Bilney's faith. It has been interpreted as having been influenced to one extent or another by Wycliffitism, Erasmianism, Lutheranism, Protestantism, and most recently, Evangelicalism. Some scholars have not identified it with any "ism," rather they have made observations like the following: "Bilney was neither a conservative Catholic nor an explicit Protestant"; or another (and a rather lame one at that), "From documents reflecting his religion, little beyond a fervent regard for Scripture can be discerned" ; or yet another, " ... his heresy, if such it can be called, involved little more than a denial of intercession to saints and of the current purgatorial doctrines."

While the bitter disagreement between More and Foxe concerning Thomas Bilney is readily understandable, the continuing discord among "objective" modern historians raises the following question: How can one man's faith elicit so many different interpretations? The answer to this question is to be found in the complexity and seeming incongruity of Bilney's faith. He preached Wycliffite heresy in the pulpit (e.g. he condemned prayers to saints, etc.) but remained orthodox at the altar. (Another argument against seeing him as a Wycliffite or Lollard is his university training; the vast majority of Lollards were uneducated, from the so-called "lower orders.") His oppressive burden of guilt and negative view of human nature would have been foreign to the Prince of Humanists. He condemned both false trust in men's merits and Martin Luther. Finally, Bilney never renounced the Pope or the Real Presence and at the stake he reportedly declared, "I have ever believed and do believe *ecclesiam Catholicam.*" With this brief historical and historiographical background, I want to return to the beginning of his life and examine the ideas and experiences that both shaped his faith and in the end sealed his fate.

As is the case for so many individuals of the early Modern period, the date and place of Bilney's birth cannot be fixed with anything approaching precision. It is thought that he was born sometime around the year 1495 in either

East Bilney or Norwich, Norfolk. Virtually nothing is known about his life until after he entered Trinity Hall, Cambridge, as a student of the civil and canon law, which he probably did towards the end of the first decade of the sixteenth century. And even then, we really only know about his spiritual life, which according to his own description, was pretty miserable. Bilney described his past spiritual troubles in a very famous letter he wrote in the year 1527, the circumstances of which I will set out later. In this letter, Bilney compared his once desperate spiritual plight to the desperate physical plight of the woman with the flow of blood whose story is recorded in the synoptic gospels. Like the woman of this well-known story, Bilney admitted to having "spent all that I had upon those ignorant physicians; that is to say, unlearned hearers of confession." According to Bilney, their prescriptions of "fastings, watchings, buying of pardons and masses" left him spiritually confused, physically weak, and financially strapped. Continuing to use this gospel story as a vehicle to tell his own, Bilney claimed that like the woman, he had finally found Jesus. He wrote, "But at last I heard speak of Jesus." He had Erasmus to thank for that.

In the year 1516, the Dutch Humanist published his *Novum Testamentum.* It was the first Greek text of the New Testament, face to face with a new Latin translation. At Cambridge it inspired the study of Greek and enchanted the humanists. Henry Bullock, a fellow of Queens, wrote to Erasmus, "People here are hard at work upon Greek and are much delighted with the publication of the *Novum Testamentum.* Great heavens, how elegant it is, how pleasing to every person of sound taste." Bilney was a person of sound taste, and he too was attracted to the *Novum Testamentum* by its translator's refined latinity. At least that is what he thought at the time. Writing some ten years later (in this same letter I have been discussing), Bilney declared that neither Humanism nor despair brought him to the Scripture; it was the providence of God. Opening the *Novum Testamentum* for the first time, Bilney chanced upon a single sentence that Saint Paul wrote to his protege Timothy: **"It is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be embraced, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief and principal."** According to Bilney these few words wrought welcome changes in his stricken heart. He wrote:

> This one sentence, through God's instruction and inward working, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being wounded with the guilt of my sins and being almost in despair, that immediately I felt a marvelous comfort and quietness, insomuch that my bruised bones leaped for joy.

This is easily the best known and least understood passage of Bilney's entire conversion narrative. A.G. Dickens, the greatest living historian of the English Reformation, writes of Bilney's sudden rapture, "This feeling arose from his acceptance of the Pauline doctrine of Justification by Faith ... ." While Dickens is probably right in ascribing this doctrine to Bilney, he is most likely wrong in associating it with "this feeling." A. E. Ogle, another English historian, is closer to the mark when he writes, "Here was the message of hope and assurance which [Bilney's] soul craved." Ogle, however, fails to offer an explanation of why this was so. The question at hand, then, is why did I Timothy 1:15 bring immediate healing and hope to Bilney? In this verse, Saint Paul offers both a concise statement of Christ's love for sinners and a candid assessment of his place among them. Bilney's reaction to it is *perhaps* best understood in the context of three closely related tendencies of late medieval English spirituality: the elevation of Mary, the fear of Christ and the worship of saints. According to some scholars, this period saw a change in Mary's standing relative to both her son and to other saints; she became the focus of unprecedented exaltation and adoration. Her shrines, like Walsingham, became major pilgrimage centers. H. Maynard Smith, suggests that Mary's elevation was accompanied by a change in the popular perception of Christ. He writes, "[The] Lord came to represent justice and his mother triumphant piety." In his book *The Reformation and the English People,* J.J. Scarisbrick writes that "pre-Reformation Catholicism was shot through with ... near-idolatrous devotion to saints." Finally, pulling these three tendencies together, A. G. Dickens writes, " ... medieval men [and women] were faced by quite terrifying views of punishment in the life to come; it was small wonder that they felt more comfortable with the saints than with God, or that they came to regard the Blessed Virgin as a merciful mediatrix for ever seeking to placate the divine wrath of the Son as Judge."

If these tendencies were present and **if** they were part of Bilney's religious world view, his dramatic reaction to Saint Paul's words can be explained in the following manner: First, the Apostle proclaims that Christ came to save sinners. This simple statement of Christ's salvific mission, bereft of any mention of impending judgment, penetrated Bilney's mind. He understood for the first time that Christ came to save him just as he was and perceived himself to be—a wretched sinner. Second, the Apostle identifies himself as the chief and principal among sinners. Although perhaps less important in Bilney's future theological development than the statement that preceded it, this admission was nonetheless stirring. Here was Paul, a saint of the highest order, citing himself as the cardinal evildoer. Bilney took refuge in the Apostle's sinfulness. Like himself, he was an avowed sinner, and he became a venerated saint. In sum, while Bilney's reading of the "most sweet and com-

fortable sentence" immediately alleviated his burden, it did not immediately alter his belief. Bilney's conversion came later, as he read further in the book he just opened.

According to Bilney, after his initial encounter with the *Novum Testamentum*, "Scripture began to be more pleasant unto me than honey or the honey-comb." From this statement it is clear that the law scholar of Trinity Hall was reading the New Testament in earnest. It was in the midst of this period of study and reflection that Bilney learned of God a "heavenly lesson." When exactly Bilney began to "taste and savour" of this heavenly lesson is unknown, and will remain so. What is known is that this lesson repudiated much if not all that he had hitherto believed about sin, forgiveness, and salvation. Bilney claimed he learned that "all my fasting and watching, the buying of masses and pardons being done without trust in Christ, who only saveth people from their sins; these I say, I learned to be nothing else but even (as Saint Augustine saith) a hasty and swift running out of the right way; ... I was taught of God that lesson which Christ speaketh of in John iii.: Even as Moses exalted the serpent in the desert, so shall the Son of Man be exalted, that all who believe in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." This lesson not only changed the content of Bilney's faith, it changed the course of his life. Like so many other converts, Bilney was filled with a desire to teach others the lesson that he had learned. He wrote in this letter from 1527 that I have been discussing, "I desired nothing more than that I, being so comforted by him, might be strengthened by his Holy Spirit and grace from above, that I might teach the wicked his ways, which are mercy and truth; and that the wicked might be converted unto him by me. . . ." It would seem that his prayer was answered, for as one scholar has noted, "His personal influence at Cambridge was immense since he was responsible for converting key men in the coming Reformation of England: Thomas Arthur, Robert Barnes, John Lambert, and Hugh Latimer."

Bilney converted Latimer in 1525, and two years later he set off on a preaching tour that landed him in the Tower, a venue that definitely was not on his original itinerary. Since his ordination as priest in 1519, this was the fourth time that Bilney had gotten into trouble with Church authorities for his preaching, and it would not be his last. This particular preaching tour had taken him through parts of East Anglia and the diocese of London. That Bilney was an effective preacher is suggested by the following comments made by a young man named John Pykas who heard Bilney preach on Sunday, 28 May 1527 at Christ Church, Ipswich. According to Pykas, Bilney had said that it was "folly" to go on pilgrimages to saints "for they cannot speak to a man or do him any good"; he also reported that Bilney said, "saints can hear no man's prayer, for they are but servants." Pykas claimed that Bilney's sermon "was most ghostly, and best made for his purpose and opinion, as any ever he heard in his life." Indeed, Pykas liked the sermon so much that "he did publish and declare it to divers persons, and set it forth as much as in him was." Given Pykas' description of the contents of Bilney's sermon and his reaction to it, I think you can understand why the church authorities moved against Bilney.

Bilney's trial opened on 27 November 1527. Seated before him in the chapter-house of Westminster was "an impressive array of judges" including Cardinal Wolsey and the Bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstal, to whom the responsibility of trying Bilney would fall after the first day's adjournment. As will become clear as I recount the proceedings, Tunstal was a tolerant man who had very little stomach for persecution; indeed, even John Foxe wrote of him, "he was no great bloody persecutor." Bilney had been charged with preaching heresy in the London cures of St. Helen's Bishopsgate, St. Magnus, Willesden, Newington, Kensington, and Chelsea. His trial began as did all heresy trials of this period, with a long series of questions or interrogatories which were designed to elicit a confession. Unfortunately, not all of Bilney's responses are extant, and from those that have survived it is difficult to piece together a complete picture of his faith. As one historian has remarked, "His responses were idiosyncratic. At times he seemed prepared to defend unorthodox opinions, at others he adhered to orthodoxy, and throughout he fervently insisted that he was loyal to the Catholic Church."

- He agreed that Luther was rightly condemned.
- He agreed that the laws of the church were scriptural and profitable but expressed a wish for greater simplicity since it was impossible for men and women to keep so many of them.
- He believed that the church was the company of the elect, known only to God.
- He agreed that images were laymen's books, adding that it's right not to adore the image but the prototype.
- He wanted to see the Lord's prayer, the creed, and the New Testament in English.
- He regarded papal pardons as being derogatory to Christ's full and perfect atonement, and therefore held that they should be restrained.

Having decided that there was more to Bilney's faith than he had chosen to reveal, Tunstall took testimony from witnesses who had heard Bilney preach at the aforementioned London churches. The first to appear were two chaplains who had been present at St. Magnus; they accused Bilney of declaring "just as Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent that Moses made ... even so should kings

and princes now-adays destroy and burn the images of saints set up in churches." They also accused him of saying "good people I exhort you before God that if priests be of evil conversation or will not apply their learning that you help them not but rather let them starve than give them any penny." It was at roughly this point in the testimony that Bilney brought the proceeding to an abrupt halt by requesting that the trial be stopped owing to the fact that he could not recall whether or not he had ever said the things he was being accused of saying. In his recent article, "Saint or Schemer? The 1527 Heresy Trial of Thomas Bilney Reconsidered," Greg Walker writes convincingly about this strange request:

> Only two conclusions can be drawn from ... [it]. Either he had a profound loss of memory which rendered him unable to recall what he had just preached ... or he was making a blatant attempt to sabotage the proceedings. The former possibility is confounded ... by the lucid accounts of his beliefs and teachings which he provided in private letters to Bishop Tunstal.

And it is to these letters that I want to turn for a few minutes before I speak about the remainder of Bilney's trial and life.

During the course of his eleven day trial Bilney wrote five letters to Tunstal, of which only three have survived. It would seem he wrote them with three goals in mind: First, he wrote to ingratiate himself with Tunstal. He opened his first letter with an encomium to him. He wrote, in part, "I think myself most happy that it is my chance to be called to examination before your reverence, for that you are of such wisdom and learning, of such integrity of life, which all men do confess to be in you. ... I rejoice, that I have now happened upon such a judge, and with all my heart give thanks unto God, who ruleth all things." Second, Bilney wrote to request a face to face, off-the-record meeting with Tunstal so that he could attempt to convert him. In his second letter he wrote, "I would to God you would give me leave privately to talk with you, that I might speak freely that which I have learned in the Holy Scriptures for the consolation of my conscience; which if you will do, I trust you shall not repent you." Tunstal, perhaps aware of Bilney's successful track record at retail evangelism, refused and asked him to put his thoughts in writing. Third, and most importantly, Bilney wrote to recount his religious experiences and articulate his religious views on his own terms and not in response to formal interrogatories and hostile witnesses.

Surprisingly, Bilney's letters, especially the second and third letters, have not received the attention they deserve from historians. The first letter, which contains Bilney's recounting of his conversion experience is of course the most interesting and has received the most attention. As you will recall, in it Bilney used the gospel story of the woman with the flow of blood as vehicle to describe his own spiritual malady and the cure for that malady that he found in the pages of the *Novum Testamentum.* Before going on to examine the remainder of this letter I want to pause just for a brief moment to take issue with the suggestion made by Walker in his article "Saint or Schemer? ..." that Bilney's description of his conversion is not as truthful and straight forward as heretofore thought. He bases this suggestion on the surmise that Bilney knew that Tunstal had helped Erasmus revise his 1516 edition of the *Novum Testamentum* and based on that knowledge he played up its part in his conversion narrative in order to "flatter [Tunstal's] scholarship and implicate him in his theological development." While I am willing to accept that Bilney resorted to perjury to derail his 1527 trial, I am rather less inclined to accept the suggestion that he misrepresented the circumstances of his conversion. First, the text of the letter itself seems to argue against such a suggestion; In the first sentence of the seventh paragraph Bilney appears to be praising the first edition of the *Novum Testamentum,* which as far as I know, was Erasmus' work alone. His words are these, "But at last I heard speak of Jesus, even then when the New Testament was **first** set forth by Erasmus; which ... I understood to be eloquently **done by him."** Second, and I am on rather less firm ground here, I find it hard to believe that Bilney would falsify his conversion experience, an experience which he considered to be wholly the work of God.

Returning to his first letter, after vividly describing his conversion experience, Bilney offered up a concise explanation and spirited defense of his controversial teaching; he said nothing about brazen serpents, or burning images or begrudging priests their due. Rather he kept the focus on himself. He wrote, "Christ was blasphemed in me ... whom with my whole power I do teach and set forth, being made for us ... our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and finally our satisfaction." Bilney claimed that he taught others the heavenly lesson he had learned: only faith in Christ reconciled man to God. He told Tunstal that he had exhorted his listeners to acknowledge their sins, condemn them, and seek after God's righteousness as expressed by Saint Paul in Romans 3: "The righteousness of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, is upon all them which believe in him; for there is no difference: all have sinned, and lack the glory of God." And in what is perhaps the most telling passage in the letter with regard to what he believed and taught about penitential acts or works, he wrote,

> But forasmuch as this hunger and thirst [for righteousness] were wont to be quenched with the fulness of man's righteousness, which is wrought through the faith of our own elect and chosen works, as pilgrims, buying of pardons, offering of candles, elect and chosen fasts ... and finally all kind of voluntary devotions against which God's word speaketh plainly in Deut. 4:2, saying, Thou shall not do that

which seemeth good unto thyself; but that which I command thee for to do, that do thou, neither adding to, neither diminishing anything from it.

Bilney confessed to Tunstal that he had often repeated this teaching, but he quickly added that his words should not be interpreted as a condemnation of penitential works, but rather as a clarification of their proper use. He closed this letter by claiming that in his teaching he had made the lawful use of these penitential works "manifest even unto children," adding, "[I have] exhorted all men [and women] not so to cleave unto them, that they, being satisfied therewith, should loathe or wax weary of Christ as many do."

In his second and third letters, which are not so much a confession of his own teaching and preaching as they are a critique of the teaching and preaching of the English clergy, Bilney explained to Tunstal why he thought so many were waxing weary of Christ: "I have often been afraid that Christ hath not been purely preached now for a long time." Bilney, as you may well imagine, has much to say about this recurring fear of his; I only have time tonight to briefly discuss a couple of points that Bilney made in these letters. In the second letter, he made the following observation, "And what marvel is it if they do not preach, when they are not sent, but run for lucre; seeking their own glory, and not the glory of God, and salvation of souls? And this is the root of all mischief in the Church, that they are not sent inwardly of God. ..." Bilney's words here go beyond the familiar anticlericalism of the age; in Bilney's mind the parish clergy not only had "to minister the sacraments," the parish clergy *had to* preach Christ purely if their parishioners were to be saved and they could only do the latter if they were called by God. I think it is fair to say, that, for Bilney, the pulpit was as important, if not more important, than the altar.

In the third letter, Bilney complained that the clergy that did preach had abandoned the gospel and "taught their own tradition," traditions, he claimed, that they have either "wrested from the Scriptures themselves or have rashly gathered them out of old rotten papers, being wrested by others." As to the reason why these preachers had abandoned the gospel, Bilney had the following to say:

> But now all men in a manner be wise, and therefore they are ashamed of the simple gospel; they are ashamed to say with Paul ... [he quotes I Corinthians 2:1-3] I brethren, when I came unto you, did not come with excellency of words, or of wisdom, preaching the testimony of Christ; for I esteemed not myself to know anything amongst you, but only Jesus Christ, and him crucified. [Bilney again] But now we are ashamed of this foolish preaching, by which **it hath pleased God to save all those that believe in him**, rather ... we preach fables and lies.

In the second to the last paragraph of this letter Bilney answers a question that Tunstal must have put to him in writing, for he notes, "com[ing] to the second point, wherein you ask how a man should preach better." Bilney responded to this potentially dangerous query by quoting scripture: "What other thing is that, than the same which the other evangelists do write, Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel unto every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He then added, "What can be more pleasant, sweet, or acceptable unto afflicted consciences, being almost in despair, than these most joyful tidings?" Once again, it would seem, Bilney is going back some ten years to his own experience when he was almost in despair and found hope and healing in Saint Paul's words to Timothy.

The final passage that I want to share with you is second only to Bilney's conversion narrative in capturing what I think is the essence of both his conversion and his religious convictions. Bilney is writing about some of the preachers that he had heard recently, and about their preaching he remarked, " ... if I had heard such preachers of repentance in times past, I should utterly have been in despair." And then:

> And to speak of one of those famous [preachers], after he had sharply inveighed against vice ... he concluded, "Behold," said he, "thou has lien rotten in thy own lusts, by the space of these sixty years, even as a beast in his own dung, and wilt thou presume in one year to go forward to heaven, and that in thine age, as much as thou wentest backward from heaven toward hell in sixty years?" [Bilney then commented] Is not this, think you, a godly argument? Is this the preaching of repentance in the name of Jesus? or rather to tread down the Christ with AntiChrist's doctrine? For what other thing did he speak in effect, than that Christ died in vain for thee? He will not be thy Jesus or Saviour; thou must make satisfaction for thyself or else thou shalt perish eternally!

All one has to do is think about Bilney's miserable spiritual condition before his conversion to understand his reaction to this sermon. Bilney's message to sinners was of course different; he called upon them to confess their sins, to condemn them and to seek righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.

Bilney's letters did not have their desired effect on Tunstal, indeed they had just the opposite effect on him; he introduced them into the court record as further evidence of Bilney's heretical beliefs. And the letters were not the only new evidence that was added to the record; the court, rejecting Bilney's motion to halt the proceedings on the grounds that he could not remember what he had preached, continued to take testimony from witnesses who had been in attendance at Bilney's sermons in East Anglia and in London. They testified that Bilney made the following statements in their presence:

- that going on pilgrimages was nought, and that no man should use it, for it were better not: and that

> rather he should tarry at home and give the alms to the poor; • that people should pray only to God, and neither to our Lady, Saint Peter, Saint John nor any other saint in heaven, for if any man had need, none of them could help ... but only God; • that man is so imperfect, that in no wise he can merit by his own deeds; • that preachers before this hath been Antichrists; and now it hath pleased our Saviour Christ to show these false errors and give another way and manner of preaching of the holy gospel of Christ, to the comfort of your souls.

Bilney's refusal to answer these charges or any other charges made against him expedited his trial; on 3 December 1527, Tunstal summarized the evidence against him and asked him if he was willing to abjure and submit himself to the discipline of the church. Bilney flat-out refused. To understand the stand-off that followed this refusal, you must be aware of the different outcomes that Bilney and Tunstal were after; for his part, Bilney wanted to force Tunstal to face the unpleasant prospect of condemning him to death with the hope that mercy would prevail over duty; Tunstal, who in the words of John Foxe, "was no bloody persecutor," wanted more than anything to extract a voluntary confession out of Bilney. On 4 December, the second day of the stand-off, Tunstal again asked Bilney to abjure; he replied defiantly, "I stand to my conscience." Tunstal then called for a recess and told Bilney to go to "a void place and deliberate with himself." Bilney returned from his solitary deliberation just as determined "to force Tunstal's hand" as he was before he left. And it was at this point that Tunstal attempted to ratchet-up the pressure on Bilney by beginning to read the sentence of condemnation. "I, by the consent and counsel of my brethren here present, do pronounce thee, Thomas Bilney, who has been accused of diverse articles, to be convicted of heresy; and for the rest of the sentence we take deliberation till tomorrow." He blinked! The next day was much like the one that had preceded it with Tunstal asking Bilney to submit and return to the Church and Bilney responding that he was "not separate from it." And thus the stand-off continued with Tunstal both unwilling to condemn or compromise and Bilney unwilling to concede. On 5 December Tunstal yet again asked Bilney to abjure and for the first time Bilney did not refuse, but rather he requested time to consider it with his friends. Tunstal granted Bilney's request stipulating that he return within three days prepared to "give a plain determinate answer what he would do in the premises." On 7 December, he returned to the chapter house of Westminster prepared to concede. He told Tunstal, "he was persuaded by ... his friends, he would now submit himself, trusting that [he] would deal gently with both in abjuration and penance." In his Oath of Abjuration Bilney declared, "I do detest and abjure all manner of heresies and articles following, whereupon I am now defamed, noted, vehemently suspected, and convicted." Having heard the words that he had so patiently waited to hear, Tunstal ordered Bilney to make public penance at St. Paul's and to place himself in the custody of Cardinal Wolsey. To Tunstal's great relief the trial was over, but for Bilney the end of the trial marked the beginning of trials that would eventually lead him back to another bishop's court.

Bilney was imprisoned in the Tower for about one year before he returned to Cambridge in 1529. According to Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, he returned to his alma mater so full of "sorrow and repentance that he was near the point of utter despair." Foxe's account is largely confirmed in a passage from a sermon preached by Hugh Latimer in 1549. Latimer, you will recall, had been converted to the reformed faith in the early 1520's by Bilney. This is the way he described Bilney upon his return to Cambridge, "I knew a man myself, Bilney, little Bilney, ... who, [after his penance and imprisonment] was come again to Cambridge, had such conflicts within himself that his friends were afraid to let him alone." It was because he had not been true to the Word, he had chosen to compromise rather than confess. Listen to the remainder of Latimer's description: "[Bilney's] friends were fain [or willing] to be with him day and night, and comfort him as they could, but no comforts would serve. And as for the comfortable places of Scripture, to bring them unto him, it was as though a man should run him through the heart with a sword, for he thought the whole scriptures sounded to his condemnation." The very scriptures which Bilney had once described as being "more pleasant ... than the honey or the honey comb" had become for him a source of bitter remorse and shame.

It is not known what happened to Bilney during this dark, dark time in his life which lasted from roughly the beginning of 1529 to the beginning of 1531. What is known is that at some time, most likely in the early months of 1531, he decided once again to preach the gospel. According to Foxe, Bilney gathered his friends around him and told them that he was "going up to Jerusalem," a biblical allusion whose significance was of course not lost on any of them. After taking his leave of them, he travelled to Norwich and began calling on those men and women whom he had converted in years past, reassuring them that the doctrines that he had abjured were indeed true. He visited the so-called "anchoress of Norwich," a female hermit whom he had also converted previously and gave her a copy of Tyndale's New Testament. He then took to the fields around the city and preached to any and all that

would listen to him. Before long he was cooling his heels in a prison cell, charged with heresy. Bilney's trial did not last very long; he was condemned, degraded, and handed over to the secular authorities for execution. Before I speak about his death, I want to read a brief passage from a letter that Bilney wrote to his parents during the final days of his life, a letter which has been all but ignored:

> Father and mother, according to my duty I lowly commend me unto you, praying you of your daily blessing certifying you that at the writing of this bill (thanks be to God) I was as hail and merry as ever I was in my life. And so I have been continually both day and night ever since the beginning of my joyful vexation and merry trouble. ... This I say father and mother that ye should take no thought for me, but be merry and glad in almighty God, heartily thanking him for his grace, mercy, and goodness ... he hath always plentifully showed unto me, but especially in this little storm and tempest. . . .

The "little storm and tempest" ended for Bilney on a windy 19th of August 1531. On that day he confessed his sins to a priest and received the Sacrament of the Altar. Before being attached to the stake, he addressed the large crowd that had turned out to watch him burn. He recited the articles of the Creed and confessed that he had offended the church. He then prayed privately and prepared himself to die. Because of the wind, the flames were blown away from him and death came slowly and painfully.

In my mind, on that day the Catholic Church in England burned one of its own. Bilney never left the Church, in his mind; he simply tried to bring the Church back to Christ. His conversion experience convinced him that countless men and women did not comprehend the profound significance of Christ's death and resurrection. His preaching tours had convinced him that many knew nothing about the latter event. "Surely, I have heard many say, that they never heard speak of the resurrection of the body." He blamed the clergy for this woeful ignorance, declaring they preach good works, "often times speaking nothing at all of Christ." He desperately wanted his listeners to understand the heavenly lesson God had taught him: that through faith in Christ their sins were completely forgiven, and as forgiven sinners they could know a loving God. Bilney believed with all of his heart that each member of the Church needed to "convert to Christ," personally to acknowledge the sufficiency of Christ's atonement and resurrection. Bilney preached Christ. He wanted each person he met, from the inhabitants of the lazar cots of Cambridge to the prelates of the chapter-house of Westminster, to know him and trust him as he did. Bilney went to his death loyal to the Church he loved and confident in the love of Christ. He is best remembered as a Catholic reformer. ❑

Botanical (after Sappho)

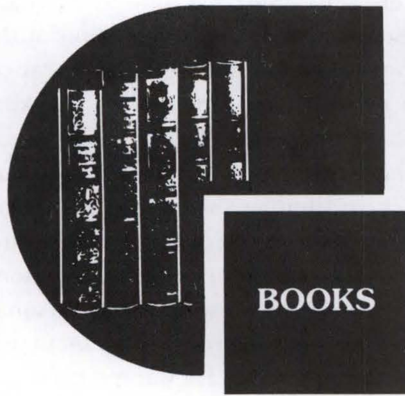
I admit

I love what
grows in my garden.
Early, I brew coffee
and step outside.

Blue flax.
The fallen litter
of petals from poppies.
Dame's rocket blazing
its purple flames.

And I wanted you
to see it
before
the flowers fade.

Patricia Clark



A Growing Concern

David J. O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture.* Marynoll, New York: Orbis, 1994, 240 pp.

It is a fine question whether the remarkable outpouring of books and articles on Christian higher education in the last few years is a sign of crisis or renewal. Probably both. To that growing and impressive list must now be added David J. O'Brien's *From the Heart of the American Church,* a book that addresses contemporary issues in the large Catholic sector of Christian higher education in a highly valuable way.

David J. O'Brien brings impressive credentials to this study. A longtime professor at the College of the Holy Cross, O'Brien is, along with Philip Gleason and Jay Dolan of Notre Dame, one of those accomplished professional historians who uses his deep knowledge of American Catholic traditions to interpret Catholic culture to wide audiences. O'Brien's earlier books on *American Catholics and Social Reform, The Renewal of American Catholicism,* and *Isaac Hecker* all displayed his ability to incorporate professional learning into historical inquiries that speak to contemporary concerns.

A similar though even more contemporary voice informs this volume. O'Brien's thorough knowledge of American Catholicism, past and present, is evident throughout the book. He draws on accounts of Catholic higher education by Philip Gleason, Alice Gallin, and many others, but perhaps even more on his own deep experience within Catholic colleges of all sorts. This is very much a shrewd inside observer's report, and it shows.

As much as he knows about Catholic higher education, O'Brien knows even more about the American Catholic Church and its complex relations with American culture. The first major virtue of this book is that, unlike many accounts of Christian higher education, it insists that Catholic higher education must be viewed in the context of the Catholic Church, the Catholic people, and their history in the United States. (The title is a takeoff from *Ex Corde Eccclesiae,* Pope John Paul II's 1990 apostolic constitution on Catholic universities.) While O'Brien knows that Catholic colleges are very much a part of the history of American higher education, what makes them different—what makes any genuine Christian higher education different—is their connection to the Church.

But of course that relationship has become increasingly problematic, and *From the Heart of the American Church* explains why. In their earliest phase Catholic colleges "helped Catholics to survive" in America and trained religious leaders. In their second phase (roughly until the mid-1960s) they helped Catholics move up the social and economic ladder of American society, while providing a "subcultural" ideological critique of the general trends in American thought based neo-Thomist philosophy. But in the 1960s, for a host of intellectual and practical reasons that O'Brien carefully elaborates, most of Catholic higher education not only broke its formal legal ties to the institutional Church (mostly the founding religious orders), but also set out to achieve full academic excellence as that was defined by the American academy generally.

This final "Americanization" of Catholic higher education was only one small part of the larger opening of American Catholics to the world occasioned by their own social mobility, Vatican II, and the transformations of American culture. O'Brien contends throughout the book that no simple declension into "secularization" has been at work in the Catholic academy. Rather, what has occurred is part of a much larger process involving the encounter of religious tradition and modernity, most of which Catholics initially welcomed. But as O'Brien quotes his college roommate, "Never want anything too much; you might get it!" Catholics wanted to become thoroughly American, and Catholic academics wanted to become top-drawer academic professionals. Now they are both: but success has brought more problems than anyone could have imagined.

In the middle chapters of the book, O'Brien provides a highly useful and fair-minded account of the debates that have gone on in recent years inside Catholic higher education and the Catholic Church regarding the present and future of these remarkably successful but currently uncertain institutions. O'Brien presents the widely appealing arguments of those who, like Fathers James Burtchaell and Avery Dulles, regard Catholic colleges as sliding down the "slippery path" to secularization fol-

lowed earlier by many Protestant institutions. But he also presents and interprets the less well known arguments of keen observers like Michael Buckley, Alice Gallin, William Shea, and especially Michigan historian James Turner, who insist (and O'Brien agrees) that the issues go much deeper than simply institutional accommodation to secularization—and that any proposed solutions must therefore go deeper as well.

Special problems that affect Catholic higher education include the growing doctrinal vigilance of the Vatican regarding the theology taught at Catholic colleges, which creates a countervailing resistance to "Catholic identity" among Catholic educators, especially faculty, who find the whole subject dangerous and therefore tend to turn away from seeking creative solutions. O'Brien also persuasively shows that the growing "popular evangelicalism" within the American Catholic Church presents perhaps an even greater threat to Catholic intellectual life than the Vatican, because it tempts everyone to avoid the real issues and focus on piety and pastoral life. But O'Brien contends that "the valuable work of campus ministries and theology departments, and the visibility of Catholic symbols [on campuses] too often substitute for serious engagement with broader issues of ecclesial and social responsibility. In short, if one asks, in teaching and research, what is being done that is Catholic, rather than what is being said that is Catholic, the record, although not meagre, is not close to what it might be" (68).

The root of the problem, O'Brien argues, lies not in an insufficiently vigorous piety, or in the failures of Catholic institutions to be more vigilant in hiring committed Catholics, but in the separation of private faith and public life, of personal belief and lay vocation, that affects Catholic scholars on Catholic campuses just as it does Catholics (he might as well say Christians) in all spheres of American life. The problems of reviving a vigorous Catholic intellectual life may be more complex and deeply rooted in modernity, but they are not essentially different from those facing all of religion as it attempts to address the modern American public world. "What is at stake here is not so much Catholic identity," O'Brien argues, "as religion's role in intellectual life and American culture. Both denominational and sectarian options, alert in their criticism of liberalism, surrender to its demands by abandoning the public task."

As a result, O'Brien calls for fresh ways of enhancing Catholic higher education's Catholicity, not so much through mission statements and attempts to bolster churchly identity, but through programs that address the deepest issues affecting all of American culture, using the Catholic tradition as an intellectual resource. Among useful features of the book is O'Brien's highly practical survey of the quite diverse actual steps being taken in this direction by endeavors like the Jesuit Institute at Boston College, the Values program at LeMoyne College, and the Lilly Fellows program at Valparaiso University. He also calls for a national Catholic student movement, a center for Catholic scholarship, and efforts to introduce issues of faith and social responsibility into the undergraduate curriculum.

Some critics may suggest that O'Brien's approach concedes too much to the pervasive nonreligious if not antireligious spirit of contemporary American intellectual life, and avoids the very pointed questions raised even by Catholic liberals like Peter Steinfels and Kenneth Woodward about the visible failures of Catholic colleges to take seriously their mission of forming the mature religious identity of Catholic young people. Indeed, O'Brien may not take seriously enough—as few of us do—the obstacles that Christian young people, as well as Christian academics, today face in developing an intellectually mature Christian identity and outlook on the world, even on Christian campuses. The entire context of experiences and connections that enabled a David O'Brien to come of out of Notre Dame in 1960 ripe for development as a Catholic scholar and intellectual are not very readily available, if at all, and that problem is not easily overcome. O'Brien also alludes, briefly and trenchantly, to the root of many of our problems in graduate education, but suggests few solutions.

Neverthless, *From the Heart of the American Catholic Church* offers an invigorating and challenging approach to the questions of Christian higher education that increasingly engage us these days, as they must. While others are undoubtedly correct that Christian—and Catholic—higher education must continue to draw deeply from its spiritual wells, O'Brien is also correct that we cannot retreat behind walls while failing to address the wider American culture of which we are a part. To this Lutheran academic, at least, O'Brien's call for Catholic colleges to train "disciples and citizens" echoed familiar notes of the "two kingdoms" in which Christians must simultaneously live in this world.

Mel Piehl

Merrimon Cuninggim, *Uneasy Partners: The College and the Church.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994.

This book contains the best argument for appreciating and maintaining the weak but affable relationships that so many church-related colleges currently have with their sponsoring religious traditions. It conveys strong approval of the trends that have

shaped most church-related colleges since the sixties; as such it vigorously endorses the status quo and the incremental gains that might flow from it into the future.

The book paints a rosy picture that I would love to affirm but cannot. Indeed, I believe that the book's argument reflects the complacent beliefs and practices that got the mainline church-related colleges into the innocuous relation to their sponsoring traditions in the first place. It is an apologia for the kind of leadership that in the last thirty years presided over the erosion of Christian specificity in the majority of mainline church-related colleges.

Those are strong words. No doubt the author of *Uneasy Partners* would identify them as the protests of a neo-conservative, who, he believes, as a group have misunderstood the changes that have happened since the sixites and therefore wistfully long for the good old days. Indeed, he spends a whole chapter debunking the critiques of Burtchaell, Marsden and Hauerwas, among others.

But let the man have his day in court. And the man, Merrimon Cuninggim, is no lightweight. He is the epitome of mainline Protestantism at its apex. His distinguished record includes being a Rhodes Scholar, a professor of religion and a chaplain, a high official in the Danforth Foundation, a seminary dean, a college president, a trustee of church-related colleges, a member of many national councils summoned to examine church-related higher education, and a consultant for myriads of such colleges. He has had perhaps more contact with a wide range of church-related colleges than any living person. So he speaks from wide knowledge and deep experience.

Much of what he says is incontestable. He believes that church-related colleges have passed through three phases. The first, running from the nineteenth century up until the thirties, was one in which the church called the shots and the college was the junior partner. The second, from the thirties until the sixties found the relationship one of parity. Since the sixties the colleges have, for many reason, become autonomous. They are now the senior partner and call the shots. In many cases they have declared complete independence from any entanglements with institutional church life.

His main contention is that the vast majority of church-related colleges have maintained a credible connection with the church tradition which sponsored them. He believes they generally "do strive for both excellence and faithfulness" (119).

We might somewhat easily come to agreement with him on what academic excellence is, but how about faithfulness? Here is how he sums up his description of "the archetype," the church-related college that embodies his idea of faithfulness:

> A church-related college is, first, a college; and when that is said,it is an institution that honors its rootage in the past in both profession and practice, that believes deeply in the academic values of truth, freedom, justice, and kinship, and that has a relationship with its church that is credible and mutually understood. (117)

The author proceeds to unpack these three characteristics that define for him a genuine church-related college. Let me comment on each. First, the college should honor its heritage. This means that it should not be ashamed of its past. It should appreciate it and publicly celebrate it. It should also, Cuninggim thinks, offer courses in religion and opportunities for worship and service. His handling of "courses in religion" is instructive. The church should not insist on anything particular. Rather, "the college, whatever its churchly tie, must provide for whatever it believes to be the preferred way to study religion seriously" (102).

The academic values of truth, freedom, justice, and kinship (our connectedness to the manifold realities of the world) should occupy the central place in the academic enterprise. Church-related colleges ought to pursue them with zeal and integrity so that students might take them to mind and heart. He believes that because of their particular rootage, church-related colleges may be more constant and firm in their commitment to these values. These values are, after all, "derivative from the church's own central faith" (114).

Third, the relationship of college and church should be one of judicious counsel. The church should not insist on any membership requirements for administrators, faculty or students. Rather, both church and college should respect each other's autonomy so that each can fulfill "its own purpose and destiny" (115).

He asserts that many colleges approximate this archetype and therefore are appreciated by their churches. Such colleges, he believes, will flourish in the future. Perhaps so, but even if

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❑ **Robert Benne** is Jordan-Trexler Professor in the Department of Religion and Philosophy in Roanoke Colllege. He is the author of numerous articles on the intersections of faith and life in the social world.

❑ **John Wallhausser** teaches at Berea College, where he serves also as that institution's representative to the Lilly Network.

they do, what gives them notable Christian distinctiveness? With this question we move from appreciation to criticism.

Cuninggim does not think that the sponsoring religious tradition should insist that key persons in the college be members of that tradition. Requirements like that, he thinks, belong to the outmoded "marks of the Christian college philosophy" held by an earlier generation of church and college leadership. He sharply distinguishes himself from an earlier leadership that worried about governance issues, "critical masses" of students and faculty, financial support by the church, theological orthodoxy, and campus religious ethos. Neoconservatives, he asserts, are trying to reintroduce these reactionary notions. Only colleges belonging to the Christian Coalition of Colleges take such notions seriously anymore. And some of these, he avers, are merely "propaganda colleges," for which he has little patience.

Yet the author has his own "marks," which I have explained earlier. And I find them sadly deficient. While they might characterize an excellent liberal arts college to which churches might continue a mild and friendly relationship, they lack anything that one could call specifically Christian. They are unabashedly "First Article" colleges, as the Lutheran Church in America used to put it.

What is the problem with that? The key problem is that Cuninggim does not believe that the Christian vision ought to have any direct and public relevance to the college's central mission. At best it has an indirect one that grounds the academic values we all cherish, but one wonders how long such a grounding would endure if it is never publicly articulated by serious Christians. Further, for the author, the Christian vision in its particular denominational embodiment has nothing to say directly to the faculty and students about ultimate things, about intellectual issues of perennial importance, about curricular matters and about the moral and social ethos of the campus. It should make no direct intellectual and moral claims. These are given over to "autonomous" intellectual processes. In this scenario the religious tradition accepts fully its marginalization in its "own" college. At best the Christian vision is one voice among many; at worst it is a social ornament.

Cuninggim, I fear, does not realize how pervasively "the Enlightenment paradigm" has affected the colleges. The faculty trained within that paradigm in graduate universities are generally convinced that religion is a private matter that has no intellectual relevance whatever for the specific theological tradition. For example, in the vast majority of Methodist colleges it would be very rare indeed to find a course in Wesleyanism, let alone discover how Wesleyanism might be relevant to other "secular" fields of learning or to the social life on campus.

It takes great courage, persistence, and strategic intelligence to make a religious vision publicly relevant in our own denominational colleges. It demands a bevy of strong Christian intellectuals spread across the college who connect their faith with their work. Cuninggim gives us a good rationale for maintaining a rather benign affability between good liberal arts colleges and the church, but fails in giving us a strategy that would meaningfully connect the Christian vision with the life of those very colleges. The kind of relationship he proposes leads neither to partnership nor creative uneasiness.

Robert Benne

Hans Frei. *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays.* Ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

This collection of essays by the late Hans Frei brings together scattered writings on the relation of theology and narrative. The theological community has been aware that Hans Frei's death in 1988 tragically interrupted his work of shaping the distinctive features of narrative theology as an extension of post-liberal theology. George Hunsinger and William Placher, two students of this commanding Yale University teacher and theologian, have collaborated twice to make available posthumous collections of Frei's writings. The first work was built from Frei's unfinished reflections on a theory of theological "types," *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.) [Reviewed in *The Cresset*, Nov., 1994 Vol LVIII, No. 1]. Recently, in a formidable tribute to their teacher, Hunsinger and Placher have collected, in a carefully organized presentation, essays and addresses that chart Frei's exploration of links between theology and narrative. It is a splendid book. But it is also a demanding one.

Ten essays and lectures, some not previously published, are gathered in this volume. Three are taken from the late 1960s, the remainder chiefly from the 1980s. One finds in them not so much the turns and changes in Frei's thinking but its deepening; the going deeper does not mean a narrowing but a widening, a reaching outward to become—in the words of Frei's hope for "post-liberal theology"—"a generous orthodoxy."

Hans Frei began with a Barthian intent to bring Christianity into the controversies and discus-

sions of late twentieth century theology. He probed the structure and logic of "realistic" narrative to resist the relativism and subjectivism of some postmodernist critical theory (he built on insights from Erich Auerbach, Frank Kermode, and the analytic philosopher, Gilbert Ryle). As he went deeper and further he saw possibilities not earlier evident. Accordingly, for instance, in a late essay [Chapter 7], Frei reached beyond the Barth vs. Schleiermacher impasse and began to speak of possible "convergence" of the two, not in a cheap blending but in hard won insights based on his reflections on Christology and narrative.

The chapters are, then, not in a strict chronological sequence but ordered thematically and systematically. The opening chapters provide Frei's earliest formulations of questions about the structure of "realistic narrative" and how it might apply to the Christological claims in Scripture, specifically the Synoptic Gospel narratives. Frei's Duns Scotus-like attachments to the particular and singular, as prior to general interpretative patterns and hermeneutical theories, converge on the death and resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel narrative; it is the defining story, Christianity's metastory. "Narrative theology," in its passage through the book, seems to become, not surprisingly, a narrative Christology.

The essays' integration is aided by the editors' brief introductions to each chapter; they detail the contributions of each writing within a comprehensive vision of Frei's overall theological project and achievement. Even more, Placher's introduction and Hunsinger's epilogue make these dense essays manageable and even rich by providing concise, lucid overviews. However, they do not simply describe or report but also interrogate the texts. Following the practice of their teacher, they too "force a question." Hunsinger, for example, while presenting Frei the theologian, is dogged in questioning Frei's evaluation of the older liberalism and about the grounds of post-liberal narrative theology's effort to replace it.

The book is demanding because Frei's thinking is finely woven and his style dense. Acknowledging an often "tortured syntax Hunsinger offers and explanation: "It was almost as though his mind were an extraordinarily sensitive photographic plate, taking in a mass of data all at once, yet with a fine-grained reception of detail . . . The agony seemed to arise from trying to describe some particular part without losing its concrete and complex embeddedness in the matrix of the whole, with all the subtle interrelations and contrasts which that embeddedness seemed to entail" (263). An Hegelian eye winks out from the text. So be warned: each paragraph is a search for a concrete universal. Yet I know of no better introduction for showing how many of the questions and conflicts pressing contemporary theology intersect and how, in the hands of a dialectical conjurer like Frei, these intersections can open to startling consequences. The book deserves to be read with attention because of its tough-minded devotion to the practice of theology and its provocative display of a "generous orthodoxy."

John Wallhausser

Nurturing Souls: Learning And The Sciences Of Human Development

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Sharon Daloz Parks, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Further titles of interest to readers of the Cresset Lilly issue:

❑ Thomas O. Buford, *In Search of a Calling: The College's Role in Shaping Identity.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995.

❑ David Hoekema, *Campus Life and Moral Community: In Place of In Loco Parentis.* Lanham: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, 1994

❑ George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief.* Oxford University Press, 1994.

❑ Douglas Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education.* Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.

❑ *From Christ to the World: Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics.* Edited by Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy, and Allen Verhey. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994.

Notes on Poets:

Edward Byrne is a member of the Department of English at VU. This year his poems have appeared in the *Dominion Review,* the *Georgetown Review* and *Southern Poetry Review.* His book, *Words Spoken, Words Unspoken* will be published in September by Chimney Hill Press.

Patricia Clark teaches at Grand Valley State University. Her poems have appeared in *The New Criterion, North American Review* and the *Seattle Review.*

LILLY FELLOWS PROGRAM IN HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

The Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts, established in 1991, addresses two critical problems faced by church-related institutions of higher learning in the United States. First, though many church-related colleges and universities are seeking to recover or refortify a sense of purpose and identity, there has been no sustained national conversation expressly designed to renew and deepen a sense of corporate vocation among these schools. Second, settings for the formation of younger scholars who wish to pursue their vocational commitments at church-related colleges and universities scarcely exist in the United States. In brief, the hegemony of the secular research university has gradually eroded both institutional and individual senses of Christian vocation, leaving many schools and many Christian scholars in need of renewed vision and mutual support.

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These initiatives bring focus, clarity, and energy to a critical aspect of a much larger project: the imaginative reformulation and implementation of an agenda for church-related higher learning for the twenty-first century.

For more information about the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts, contact:

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