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VERSE

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The Fire Inside Us
J. T. Ledbetter

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Ernst Schwidder was head of the Department of Art at Valparaiso University from 1958 to 1962. His maquette for the Christus Rex figure that adorns the chancel crucifix in the Chapel of the Resurrection was an early contribution to the university's heritage of religious art. Schwidder's partnership with chapel architect Charles Stade led to further commissions for liturgical art and chancel design; the two collaborated on many notable Midwestern churches.

At Schwidder's most successful installations, the cosmic realities of the Christian faith seem to explode into our visual consciousness. The descending dove of the Spirit, the flowing lines of wind, water, fire, and Spirit want to sweep us up into the joy of acclamation: "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for his mercy endures forever!"

—Joel Nickel

On the back cover: Hegewisch Marsh in Southeast Chicago, with the 130th Street and Torrence Avenue Railroad Truss Bridge in the background. Photo by Thomas Jay Oord.

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ESSAYS

Lea F. Schweitz 4 Reforming Our Visions of City Nature

Matthew L. Becker 12 Christ in the University: Edmund Schlink's Vision

Mark R. Schwehn 22 Remembering Arlin: The "Gentle Giant" of Christ College and the Lilly Fellows Program

Stephany Schlachter 27 Uniting Liberal and Professional Learning through Christian Mission

Peter Ely, S.J. 32 Jesuit Higher Education in the Age of Pope Francis

Paul J. Willis 55 Into the Wilderness

REVIEWS

David Weber 43 God in the Grammar: A Review of The Kingdom of Speech by Tom Wolfe and Preaching the Luminous Word by Ellen F. Davis

Cara Strickland 49 Crisis Management: A Review of Rumba Under Fire: The Arts of Survival from West Point to Delhi, edited by Irina Dumitrescu

Mel Piehl 52 Leading by Example: A Review of Realizing the Distinctive University: Vision and Values, Strategies and Culture by Mark William Roche

VERS

Jeremy Michael Reed

Selah

11

Chelsea Wagenaar

Prelude to Circulatory System

26

Jeffrey Galbraith

God the Gorilla or Wolf

31

J. T. Ledbetter

The Fire Inside Us

42
2016 Arlin G. Meyer Prize in Non-fiction

The Arlin G. Meyer Prize is awarded biennially to a fulltime faculty member from a college or university in the Lilly Fellows Program National Network whose work exemplifies the practice of the Christian artistic or scholarly vocation in relation to any pertinent subject matter or literary and artistic style. The 2016 Arlin G. Meyer Prize has been awarded to the author of a non-fiction work that emerges from her practice of the vocation of the Christian scholar, in accord with the principles and ideals of the Lilly Fellows Program. In subsequent years, the Meyer prize will honor those who practice in the fields of music performance, imaginative writing, performing arts, and visual arts. The $3000 prize honors Arlin G. Meyer, Professor Emeritus of English at Valparaiso University, who served as program director of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts from its inception in 1991 until his retirement in 2002.

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A few months before he finished first grade, my youngest sat me down on the couch, picked up Shel Silverstein’s *The Giving Tree*, and proceeded to read the whole thing, cover to cover. This was, for me, a delight beyond measure. Despite concerted parental effort, books never much held his interest until then. He had cared about being a scientist, a magician, an athlete, but not a reader.

Because of this, a line from David Weber’s review of Tom Wolfe’s book *The Kingdom of Speech* caught my attention. Weber quotes Wolfe: “There’s no telling how we first learned to code and decode t-r-e-e” because there are “no traces of any evolution of language through the sounds that apes make, or dolphins for that matter” (page 43).

Speaking as the parent of a new reader and not as an expert on the evolution of linguistic capacity, I have an idea of how that shift happened for my son: his well-trained, dedicated teacher was able to spark the desire and provide him the tools to accomplish this task. But knowing the how didn’t make the experience of listening to him read that story any less miraculous.

The gift of reading is on full display in this issue. In the opening essay, Lea F. Schweitz considers how to read the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature—especially the Book of Nature, as more and more places are known for their urban trappings rather than their natural ones. Peter Ely’s piece, “Jesuit Education in the Age of Pope Francis,” examines the distinctive characteristics of Jesuit schools, one of which is the discernment of spirits, or the ability to “read” and understand one’s deepest feelings as “a means whereby God’s will can be made manifest through careful reflection, rather than as disturbances to be put aside” (page 35). Paul J. Willis likens reading to entering a wilderness area where one needs to “be alert to what lies in wait beyond every switchback, every silent turn of the page” (page 56).

What’s the point of all this reading? At the very least, reading carefully and well benefits our life together. Schweitz explains how reading the Book of Nature even in scrappy urban locations helps transform our connection to creation and the Creator. Ely considers how Ignatius of Loyola’s spiritual wisdom applies to our increasingly ecumenical, interreligious, and intercultural reality. Mel Piehl’s review of Mark Roche’s book *Realizing the Distinctive University* and essays by Matthew L. Becker and Stephany Schlachter all decode how certain perspectives and activities allow colleges and universities—especially church related ones—to do their best work.

The essays by Schweitz and Schlachter are both adapted from presentations they originally delivered last October at the national conference of the Lilly Fellows Program in the Humanities and the Arts, held at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. It’s fitting that this issue also includes Mark R. Schwehn’s memorial tribute to Arlin Meyer, who served for many years as director of the Lilly Fellows Program and dean of Christ College—The Honors College at Valparaiso University.

In his tribute, Schwehn reveals the secret ingredient for making reading truly miraculous, an ingredient that Meyer shared with his students. “It is good to teach students how to read, but it is much better to teach them to love reading. Indeed, for Arlin, without the love, one could never really learn to read well. Love is never sufficient by itself for understanding. But without the love, without that special hunger for unity with the subject under study, certain truths about a text will remain forever obscure regardless of the amount of disciplined attention lavished upon them” (page 25).

As you prepare to enter the wilderness area of this issue, may you be outfitted with a comfortable couch and plenty of love—and may you be rewarded with delight beyond measure.

—HGG
Reforming Our Visions of City Nature

Lea F. Schweitz

Let me tell you a story. It’s one that my family tells about my mother as a young girl on a family outing. The only thing I know about this outing is that my mom was bitten by a Canada goose (Branta canadensis). Since geese don’t technically have teeth, the story may be slightly exaggerated. In defense of the goose, it is likely that there were goslings nearby, and she was simply trying to protect them. However, my mom’s encounter left an impression. Although there are no physical scars, the impact has been mythic in scope because it has served as a warning for two generations: Do not get too close to a Canada goose!

Both my older son and I had learned this lesson at my mother’s knee. It echoed in our collective memory one August afternoon as my younger son skipped curiously into an approaching flock of Canada geese.

We were at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum on Chicago’s North Side. On this particular August afternoon, it was hot. 100-degree-heat-index hot. And on this particular August afternoon, my car battery died in the parking lot of the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

My younger son and I were there to pick up my older son from day camp. We chose this camp because it gives its campers an all-access pass to the great North Lawn, the North Pond nature sanctuary, and the award-winning nature museum. The lawn, pond, and museum are part of Lincoln Park, an expanse of more than 1,200 acres of green space in an expensive real estate market. Along with the lakefront, Lincoln Park is a showcase for the vision of Chicago as “Urbs in Horto,”—“City in a Garden.”

The campers had spent the day running on the lawn, meeting snakes and turtles, and digging holes. When we arrived, we expected some tales about these adventures before talk turned to baseball and our camper dove his nose into a book for the drive home. Instead, the kids were buckled into a sweltering car, as two separate sets of kind neighbor-strangers tried to get us jump-started.

To no avail.

Sweaty kids poured out of the car to find some refuge in the shade under the leafy oak trees. They wanted to kick off their sandals and run in the grass, but ubiquitous goose poop prevented it.

This is the scene: I am negotiating the dead battery, the connection with the tow truck driver, overheated kids, and my own rising anxiety. This is when my younger son wanders wide-eyed toward the flock of Canada geese. Because my older son knows my mom’s story, he believes his brother is headed toward certain death. I think we have a little more time, but that moment of decision is visceral. I remember standing beside the parking lot in between the prickly, shrubby roses as this moment of decision stretched out before me. Do I rush in and swoop him out of the approaching flock, or do I let him explore a little longer?

It’s in this long moment that I realize how little I know about these birds. I have no idea what the real risks are in this situation. Will they actually bite? If they do, what kind of damage are we talking about? Do they have diseases? If so, can they be passed on to humans? Faced with this chasm of unknowing, I simply call: “Please stay close.”

Once the children and carseats and I are buckled into an air-conditioned Uber car with a
ridiculously kind and patient driver, I recognize how much of that drama unfolded because of the story of my mom being bitten by a goose. Right at this point, a new moment of decision emerges. What are the stories that we want to tell—and tell our children—about nature in the city? How will our family retell this story of our encounter with Canada geese at North Pond? How do we keep our kids and ourselves safe enough and yet cultivate the curiosity that roots them deeply into a place that is infinitely wondrous, but often invisible? These questions apply acutely as the planet becomes increasingly urban, but they extend into rural and suburban communities as well.

How can the stories we tell about the city open us up both to the nature we find there and to the God who finds us there? These questions participate in the long theological history that claims that the Book of Nature can be read alongside the Book of Scripture as God’s self-revelation to us. It is a long established tradition that goes back, at least, to the third and fourth-century in the exegetical tradition of Ephraem, the Syrian, and the Hexaemeron series of Lenten sermons on creation (Bright, 85). It affirms that both Scripture and Nature are books that can teach us about the God confessed, taught, and preached by faithful Christians. It recognizes that both the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature are authored by the same Creator God.

Lutherans have a long history of swimming in this theological stream. One example of this comes from a late sixteenth-century German Lutheran pastor. A second example comes from the writings of Philip Melanchthon, one of Luther’s most important collaborators and a reformer in his own right. Neither approach is sufficient. Yet they attest to the importance of theoretically robust, empirically grounded visions of nature in the Lutheran heritage. Grounded in this heritage, we can tell new stories about urban nature that inspire connection to creation and the Creator in the city.

Reading One: The Moral of the Story

Kathleen Crowther has surveyed writings from Reformation-era German Lutheran pastors. Although these pastors are less known today, they were widely read in their own time (Crowther,
21). In these authors, she finds a Lutheran reading of the Book of Nature. One example is Konrad Rosbach, born in 1535, a German Lutheran pastor near Frankfurt.

In his text, *Paradise Garden*, published in 1588, he describes the flowering herb called Devil's Bite. His description includes biological features: it blooms in May and should be gathered then. It includes medicinal uses: Rosbach claims it can be used against poison and plague, and to heal sores (Crowther, 29-30). Then, finally, in an allegorical reading, Rosbach gives the spiritual meaning. The root of Devil's Bite seems to have been bitten off just as humans are cut off from the grace of God. And yet, the same little plant also reminds of the promise of Christ because it is a healing herb. Rosbach reads the natural history of plants and animals to teach a lesson.

They echo the familiar genre of Aesop's fables. In these fables, natural objects—usually animals—are used to teach a lesson. Consider the surprise ending of a race where the constancy of the tortoise wins over the raw speed of the hare. The moral of the story? "Slow and steady wins the race."

It's like Rosbach's reading of the Book of Nature: "Even a small flowering herb points to Christ." The moral of Rosbach's story is that God's promise extends to sinners; Devil's Bite is both poison and cure, just as we are sinner and saint. And, yet, because of God's promise of salvation in Christ, poison and sinner shall find a remedy and a savior. Rosbach, unlike the fables, adds biological, medical, and natural history to the telling of the tale, but in both cases the story is meant to teach a lesson.

The theological lesson isn't the only thing Rosbach wishes to convey. His message is simultaneously a work of polemics. When Rosbach instrumentalizes Devil's Bite for his moral reading of the Book of Nature, he simultaneously (and not-so-subtly, in the Reformation context) employs nature to distinguish Lutheranism from Reformed and Catholic alternatives. The Book of Nature is read as being distinctly Lutheran. Consider how effective this might be as a polemical strategy: according to Rosbach, even Nature confirms that the Lutherans got it right.

This way of reading the Book of Nature could be applied to the Canada geese. In the 1950s, this species was nearly wiped out in North America. Overhunting and declining habitats and waterways brought the number of geese dangerously close to extinction. Canada geese nearly went the way of the Passenger Pigeon, which marked the centenary of its extinction in 2014. In contrast, Canada geese are in the conservation category of least concern.

The moral of the story? From the impossible and improbable, God brings new life. Canada geese have been abundantly restored. We could
read them as a reminder that in God, even death can be overcome. In the face of extinction, life abundant remains possible through God's promise of salvation in Christ.

If you're like my seminary students, this reading is utterly unpersuasive. Rather than being spiritually edifying or theologically formative, it raises suspicions about the inappropriate coopting of nature to do the work of polemics. The situation has shifted from a polemical need to distinguish oneself from other Protestants and Catholics to being able to live well together on an increasingly urban planet. These "moral of the story"-style readings don't help with this. Are there other ways to read the Book of Nature that can ignite our spiritual imaginations to make meaningful lives in our urban homes?

**Reading Two: Laying Down the Law**

Reading Two is not sufficient either, but it highlights the Lutheran legacy of yoking emerging scientific developments and theology. Philip Melanchthon, like the Lutheran pastors that came after him, read the Book of Nature as expressing distinctively Lutheran themes. Given his formative place in the development of the Lutheran Confessions, this is not surprising. However, unlike the moral reading of the Book of Nature described above, Melanchthon read the Book of Nature "to lay down the Law." Whereas authors like Rosbach took up individual natural objects to teach a theological or spiritual lesson, Melanchthon drew on advances in anatomy and astronomy in order to reveal both the providential presence of the Creator God in humans and humanity's fallenness.

In Melanchthon's *Commentarius de anima*, human anatomy as described by Galen (130-200 CE) and updated by Andreas Vesal (1514-1564) helps explain the human condition after the Fall. For Melanchthon, the study of anatomy and physiology have a role in describing the human condition as both disordered and yet situated in a providentially organized creation, which is dependent on divine grace (Kusukawa, 60). One does not get the good news of the Gospel from reading the Book of Nature alone, but reading the Book of Nature was essential (Helm, 61). Sachiko Kusukawa describes Melanchthon's contributions as nothing short of a transformation of natural philosophy, one that incorporates anatomy—and also some astronomy—as necessary aspects of theological formation. In Melanchthon's hands, a distinctly Lutheran kind of natural philosophy emerges as a way to read the Book of Nature (Kusukawa, 114).

What does any of this have to do with the North Pond Canada geese in the opening story? In the style of Melanchthon, we might take up, for example, urban ecology or population genetics to read the Book of Nature as a story of ecological complexity and adaptation. These emerging ecological sciences could be marshaled to reveal a complex, connected world that is increasingly crafted by humans and, not surprisingly, oh-so-fallen. With this lens, the opening story about the Canada goose reveals the mirror of the law. This isn't a story that ends with a species being saved from the brink of extinction. No, when humans are at the helm without the grace of God, what you get is goose overpopulation and crap on your shoes. Geese aren't creatures of God, they're pests. Like anatomy in the hands of Melanchthon, ecology could be used to read the Book of Nature as a story to lay down the Law and ground a theological anthropology of justification by grace through faith alone.

When humans are at the helm without the grace of God, what you get is goose overpopulation and crap on your shoes.

My aim in telling the story of our Canada goose encounter through the lens of these two Reformation strategies is an attempt to make Rosbach's and Melanchthon's approach more familiar and plausible. It sets a course for unfolding the gift of Lutheran natural history. If not through teaching moral lessons or laying down the Law, how can the Lutheran gift of robust readings of the Book of Nature be re-gifted for an urban planet?
Reading Glasses

Let’s stay with our “Book of Nature” metaphor. In order to read a book, one needs the right tools for the job. One needs to know the alphabet, phonics, grammar, and idioms, while also having some sensory means to access the words—eyes or ears or touch. In addition, some of us need additional assistance—like reading glasses. Lutheran sacramental theology provides a helpful lens—a pair of reading glasses, if you will—to read the Book of Nature.

Time-lapse photography gives a clear example of what I mean. Take, for instance, Louie Schwartzberg’s National Geographic film, Mysteries of the Unseen World. Schwartzberg uses technology to see aspects of the natural world that escape our notice. For him, film operates as reading glasses for the Book of Nature. Because humans are mid-sized creatures in a universe that is bigger, smaller, faster, and slower than us, we simply do not have access to parts of the universe without some technology. By using film, aspects of nature open up to us. Filming didn’t create the aspect; it simply revealed it. This is the sense I intend for Lutheran theology as reading glasses that reveal aspects of the Book of Nature to us.

Paul Santmire’s spiritual practice of praying the Trinity prayer has a similar function. Santmire, an ecological theologian, regularly prays: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit, Come and Reign.” His practice of praying this prayer has molded his “Lutheran-colored reading glasses,” and it changes what and how he sees—especially, for instance, when he takes to his field with his scythe. He writes:

It’s not simply a matter of going out to the field to ‘commune with nature.’ When I arrive in the backfield with my scythe, the eyes of my faith have already been opened by the use of the Trinity Prayer, so that I can then see more readily what is given me to see. The Trinity Prayer is for me, in this spiritual sense, before nature... The Trinity Prayer gives me the insight that allows me to see with new eyes (Santmire, 31).

The Trinity prayer is “before nature” as a pair of reading glasses for Santmire; film is “before nature” as a pair of “reading glasses” for Schwartzberg; for me, the sacramental principle that the finite is capable of the infinite is “before nature.” It’s the theological principle that functions like a pair of reading glasses to make visible the often-invisible Book of Nature in the city.

Martin Luther had a spirituality of everyday things. One of the distinctives of Lutheran theology is the sacramental principle that the finite is capable of the infinite. In the Reformation, this claim was hotly contested.

The issue is the status of the bread and wine in the sacrament of Holy Communion, and how Christ is present. Reformation debates pitted Zwingli and his followers against Luther and his. The former claimed that Christ was present in the memory of Christ’s redemptive works; the latter claimed that Christ was really and truly present in, with, and under the bread and the wine. In other words, for Zwingli: “finitum non capax infiniti.” The finite is not capable of the infinite. The bread and wine of communion have a symbolic function. They point to the redemptive work of Christ, but Christ is not truly present in the bread and wine. They remind us of our forgiveness through Christ. Christ is present in our remembrance of his sacrifice, but Christ is not truly present.

In contrast, Luther claimed, “finitum capax infiniti.” The finite is capable of the infinite. What does this mean? In Luther’s Small Catechism, the Sacrament of the Altar is described as follows: “It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us Christians to eat and drink (Luther, 362).” Understood as such, Luther claimed that life, salvation, and the forgiveness of sins are given to those who believe the promise that bread and wine were “given for you.” This is possible because God keeps the promise to be really and truly present in the bread and wine of Communion.

When I talk with folks about a theology of urban nature, the idea that the finite can hold the infinite gets traction in the conversation—even where a translation to sacramental language does not. Everyday connections to the sacred are grounded in God’s promises that it is possible for

8 The Cresset
the sacred to be present in, with, and under ordinary, everyday things like bread and wine and water. As a place to start conversations about nature in the city, a spirituality of everyday things resonates. There is space to bring a gift of Lutheran sacramental theology as reading glasses for other city dwellers to see and name the infinite when it shows up in these unexpected places. It grounds the hope that the sacred can be surprisingly present—even in things like Canada geese.

Take care here. The claim is not that geese are sacraments like the bread and wine of communion. It is rather the claim that nature is sacramental, like music, for instance. Music, while not a sacrament, is sacramental insofar as it is a finite thing capable of the infinite (Hendel, 432). For example, it can carry spiritual messages, work as a catechetical resource, and sing, “Soli Deo Gloria!”

An everyday, sacramental spirituality is an aspect of the Reformation legacy that can help reform our visions of nature so that the Book of Nature can be read in the city. But, the proof, finally, is in the stories these reading glasses allow us to tell. When I read the Book of urban Nature, it is not only with unearned privileges that I have as a heterosexual, upper-middle class, white woman—but I also go in with the eyes and ears of a Lutheran. One of the things that this Lutheran lens has given me is the practice of meeting the world and the creatures in it—human and non-human—with an unshakable sense that there is always something more going on than what is immediately presented: the finite is always capable of the infinite.

These “reading glasses” created the space for that visceral moment of pause as my son ran toward the geese. I didn’t simply rush in to save my son from the geese because I read that scene through glasses that keep me open to the possibility that something more might be there—just beyond what I can readily see. It’s a practice of staying open to the many stories of the Book of urban Nature—and finally being moved to act once they’ve been recognized.

Reading 3: #FlocktheSystem with #Hope and #FaithActiveinLove

Our story of the geese on North Pond didn’t end after the Uber ride on that hot August day. Not long after our run-in with the geese, I was back at North Pond, sitting on a bench under a bur oak tree. The whole reason I was at the pond that day was because of the goose encounter with my kids. After that visceral pause and the realization that I knew nothing about these geese-creatures of God, I did a little research trying to learn more. One of the things I learned was that North Pond—despite being home to all these birds and prairie plants and turtles and snakes and probably coyotes—was only four feet deep, and potable city water was being used to keep it at that level. The pond was over 130 years old and aging quickly.

Without some tender loving care from the community, it is on the slow path to becoming an
overgrown puddle, an urban mosquito hotel. I was totally incredulous that all this wildlife was making it on four feet of water, so I went back to check it out. A dog owner who let his Lab off-leash to swim in the pond confirmed the data. After the dog had waded in nearly 20 feet, the water only tickled its belly-fur. It really was a pond-puddle.

But here’s the thing—my story didn’t end there. Here we are, sharing it now. We need stories like these infused with the infinity principle to see the nature of our cities and to build hope-filled visions of vital cities for the future. It’s one more way to try to read the Book of urban Nature and share its stories. It’s Lutheran natural history for an urban planet.

Just in case this all smacks of a little too much Walden Pond romanticism, let me say in closing that these glasses need to be worn in places that are much worse off than North Pond. Take, for instance, Hegewisch Marsh. It’s another urban wetland, but instead of being next to preserved ponds, a zoo, a treasured urban park, and a nature museum, this one is situated in the industrial corridor of Southeast Chicago. A discontinued landfill, an active railway, and a Ford Automotive Plant surround Hegewisch Marsh. The marsh itself has been resuscitated from the landfill runoff, contaminated soils, and past use as a recreation area for All-Terrain Vehicles. It is home to birds and turtles and frogs, but it doesn’t fit the story of pristine wilderness. The vernal ponds where the frogs live were cut into the land by those recreational vehicles. The sounds of the wind and the birds are punctuated by the noise of trains, cars, industrial horns, and air traffic. It would be easy to write off these chapters of the Book of urban Nature, but the possibility of the infinite is here too.

Nature in the city needs a chorus of voices telling its stories, asking questions like, “How has this space been crafted?” “From whom was it taken?” “What stories haven’t been told about it?” With Lutheran natural history reading glasses, we can tell stories that describe the place as it is, and at the same time, open up to the sacred that may lie hidden within. If this is right, then the conclusion of this essay is an invitation to join the flock and tell these stories. The last words are not “The End” but rather the start of your own story of nature. If you’re not sure where to start, let me suggest an opening that usually works at our house. It begins, “Let me tell you a story...”

Lea F. Schweitz is associate professor of systematic theology/religion and science at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She is also director of the Zygon Center for Religion and Science (www.zygoncenter.org). She blogs at wildsparrows.com.

Works Cited


SELAH

Refrain, it marks the break,
a line between images,
a way to turn away from
cobblestone to church,
to find doors lacking,
pushed aside to aid
the view of the central,
small but raised high
ceiling in a side street
cathedral, currently
covered in origami birds,
mostly red and pink,
strung from stone,
stretched across the nave
proclaiming Pentecost,
prayer, flame, arresting gazes
from the street. The silence
causes us to enter,
makes space to breathe.

Jeremy Michael Reed
Christ in the University:
Edmund Schlink’s Vision

Matthew L. Becker

For the past decade, I have regularly taught a course on Christians in Nazi Germany, a topic that seems more relevant today than when I started. One of the theologians we examine in that course is Edmund Schlink (1903-1984), who taught ecumenical theology at Heidelberg University after the Second World War. Since this year marks the seventieth anniversary of Schlink’s professorial lecture, I decided last summer to focus my own such lecture on his. Despite its age and the particularities surrounding its origin and delivery, his inaugural lecture still speaks meaningfully to the contemporary situation of a church-related university. His vision is worth re-visiting.

Although less well known than some other German theologians of that period—one thinks especially of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Rudolf Bultmann—Edmund Schlink was nevertheless one of the most important Protestant theologians in the middle decades of the last century. He became a Lutheran pastor in December 1931, about a year before Hitler came to power. For nearly forty years, Schlink taught at Heidelberg, where he advised numerous doctoral students and wrote many essays and books. For more than twenty-five years, he was the leading German Protestant in the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. He co-founded the oldest official dialogue between Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians, the German one that still meets periodically. He helped to found two ecumenical journals, Ökumenische Rundschau (Ecumenical Review) and Kerygma und Dogma, both of which continue today. He was as conversant in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theology as he was in the Lutheran Protestant tradition. That expertise played an important role in his helping to bring the Russian Orthodox Church into the World Council of Churches in 1961. At the Second Vatican Council, he served as the official observer from the Protestant Church in Germany. His 830-page Ökumenische Dogmatik (Ecumenical Dogmatics), on which he worked for more than forty years and which he completed just one year before his death, is the most ecumenically significant dogmatics text published by a Lutheran theologian in the twentieth century. I am currently working on an English edition of this important work.
Yet Schlink came to the study of theology in a roundabout way. Following the German custom of hearing lectures from the best professors at a variety of universities, he initially studied mathematics and physics at Tübingen, Kiel, Vienna, and Munich. This academic focus made sense, since his father had been a professor of aeronautics at a technical school in Darmstadt, where Schlink had grown up. Later, however, he began to study the social sciences, mainly because he was more and more interested in the question, "Was ist der Mensch?" — "What is a human being?" (Engelhardt, 7).

So he completed his first doctorate, not in physics but in clinical psychology at the University of Marburg. At that time, however, in 1927, he suffered a crisis of meaning that led him to leave Marburg, where he could have become a professor of psychology, in order to work as a hired hand on a Silesian farm (Skibbe 19).

During that year of milking cows and cleaning out barns, pietistic Christians from the local village influenced Schlink deeply. Conversations with a Lutheran pastor there and with one back in Darmstadt led him to spiritual renewal and a reawakened Christian faith. From this point on, he was determined to pursue theological study. He first went to the University of Münster, where in 1931 he completed his second doctorate, this time under the direction of the most famous systematic theologian of that period, Karl Barth. Schlink became one of the few Lutheran theologians at the time to take Barth's Reformed theology seriously as a key resource for contemporary reflection. He did so as he worked on his Habilitationsschrift, a second doctoral dissertation (which in effect was his third dissertation) that qualified him to teach in a German university. He completed this in 1934 at the University of Giessen.

In these early years, Schlink also served several Lutheran congregations, mostly in the Frankfurt area. During this time, he aligned himself with those Christians in opposition to the so-called Deutsche Christen ("German Christians") who were trying to align the Protestant churches in Germany with Hitler's National Socialism. The Deutsche Christen saw no contradiction between the Nazi swastika and the cross of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Deutsche Christen brought these two symbols into close relationship, as one can see in their flag. Against the Deutsche Christen, Schlink publicly defended the 1934 Barmen Declaration, which was largely written by Barth. This confession explicitly condemned the racist heresy of the German Christians. Schlink worked to strengthen those congregations that had adopted this declaration as their own. The principal means of his resistance was his mouth— that, and his tireless pastoral care. His actions of resistance—which, as Skibbe emphasizes, were of a different kind from the routes taken by Barth and Bonhoeffer—were nonetheless sufficient to get him into trouble with Nazi officials. The Nazi Ministry of Culture fired him from his initial position at Giessen, and the Gestapo later closed down Bethel Seminary near Bielefeld, where he had also been teaching (Eber 24). Schlink's preaching troubled the Gestapo, since they deemed his sermons subversive to the Nazi state. The Gestapo banned him twice from speaking in public and they threatened him with prison (see Skibbe 27-28, 43). Through a complex set of circumstances that I will not go into here, he was always able to avoid this latter consequence. Between 1941 and the end of the war in 1945, he served—illegally—as a pastor to a Lutheran congregation of the Confessing Church in Bielefeld.

Schlink suffered personally during this period as well. In 1936, only four years after he married, his wife died suddenly, leaving him to raise their two young daughters. A few years later he remarried. Irmgard Oswald was one of his students, whom he had asked to type the manuscript of his...
book on the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. In the course of their collaboration, they would occasionally take breaks, during which time they would make music together. She played the piano, he the violin. She liked Mozart, he preferred Bach. This music-making led to marriage, and then to two additional children. One of these is the retired law professor and famous author Bernard Schlink, whose semi-autobiographical novel, The Reader, was adapted into an Oscar-winning film of the same title. (I learned a couple of years ago that Frau Schlink was not a fan of the novel or the film. In her words, “the story hit too close to home.”)

In 1946, Edmund Schlink joined the faculty of Heidelberg, the oldest university in Germany. Its several buildings sit in the shadow of the famous castle there, along the Neckar River. The official entrance to the university is the neue Aula, the new lecture hall built in the early 1930s, whose auditorium was the venue for Schlink’s 1947 lecture. (On that occasion, it was full to capacity.) Above the entrance to the building is the university’s ancient motto, Dem Lebendigen Geist, “To the Living Spirit.” The figure of Athena, goddess of wisdom, stands over the portal. For centuries, important scholars at Heidelberg had defended the principle of intellectual freedom. During the Weimar years (1919-33), the university had made room for many differing political and philosophical positions. Large numbers of international students were welcomed. While some faculty there already embraced National Socialism in the 1920s, others, particularly in philosophy and the social sciences, defended Germany’s experiment with liberal democracy.

That experiment failed. After Hitler became chancellor in January 1933, Nazi ideologues completely took over Heidelberg, as they did all other universities in Germany. Younger scholars and many university students began to express more strongly their anti-republican, racist, anti-Semitic, nationalist, and imperialist convictions. According to Steven Remy, by the end of that fateful year Heidelberg was firmly in the control of professors who supported Hitler’s aims. The ancient motto of the university now became “Dem Deutschen Geist,” “To the German Spirit.” A German eagle replaced the figure of Athena. In effect, the rallying cry became, “Let’s Make Germany Great Again.” Heidelberg quickly transitioned into Hitler’s showcase university, a major center for the propagation of his ideology. By pressuring the university’s administration, students were able to have faculty members they deemed anti-Nazi removed from their positions. In that first year, administrators dismissed 59 of the 214 faculty for “racial” or political reasons (“Universität Heidelberg: 625 Years – A Brief Chronology”). Members of the Party now filled all key positions, and the university was completely coordinated to Nazi ideals and policies. This was the situation for twelve long years.

Because Nazi ideology had so corrupted Heidelberg, the university’s denazification and reconstruction after the war were difficult. Between 1945 and 1949, the university functioned under the military government of the U.S. Army. The rebirth of the university occurred largely through the work of the philosopher Karl Jaspers, who had been fired in 1937 because he was married to a Jewish woman, and through the actions of a small group of other Heidelberg professors who had been fired or had been relatively non-cooperative with the regime.

Along with his colleagues Hans von Campenhausen (professor of early church history) and Martin Dibelius (New Testament scholar), Schlink helped to rebuild the theology faculty. In the thirty years that he served there, Heidelberg became perhaps the leading place to study Protestant theology in the world. Its faculty included such other notable theologians as Günther Bornkamm (New Testament), Heinrich Bornkamm (Reformation history), Wilhelm Hahn (practical theology), Peter Brunner (systematic theology), and the Old Testament scholars Gerhard von Rad and Claus Westermann.

Schlink’s principal contribution was to make Heidelberg a center for ecumenism and ecumenical theology. Toward this end, he founded an ecumenical institute there, the first of its kind in the world. This institute—whose building was paid for in large measure by American contributions—attracted some forty international students each year, including many from the United States. Among these was Dale Lasky, who taught theol-
ogy at Valpo for several decades.

Schlink renewed Heidelberg in another significant way, namely, by fostering interdisciplinary dialogue across the faculty. In 1947 such interdisciplinary dialogue was almost non-existent. But his lecture that year helped pave the way for an annual faculty-wide conference, which was always hosted by the Heidelberg theologians at a nearby bar and restaurant. The goal of this daylong conference was discussion about a topic of wide-ranging interest. For example, that first conference in 1947 examined the relationship between theology and the natural sciences. Subsequent topics included the problem of nuclear weapons, the German legal system, universal human rights, and racism. Whatever the chosen issue, two professors, one theologian and one non-theologian, presented formal papers. Participants then discussed these papers over beer and wine. Unfortunately, these conferences ended shortly before Schlink retired in 1971. Part of the reason for this was the fact that the university had simply become too large. (Today it has more than sixty full-time theology faculty, nearly 900 theology students, and several thousand other professors teaching approximately 30,000 students.)

In 1947, however, only about 4,500 students attended Heidelberg University. The theme of Schlink’s inaugural lecture that year was “Christ and the faculties,” and its organizing object was the university’s scepter. Fashioned in the year that Columbus sailed the ocean blue, the scepter’s design goes back to 1388, just two years after Heidelberg’s founding. Since 1492, the scepter has functioned as the highest symbol of authority in the university. It is usually carried by the rector at all official ceremonies. (I suspect that to be elected rector there one must first prove that one can lift the thing!) When not in use, it is kept in the university’s museum. On top of the heavy, gold-covered silver staff is a stylized, open-sided cube, a miniature room in which the twelve-year-old Jesus is teaching four figures who sit in a semi-circle. The four figures are not the elders in the Jerusalem Temple but the four faculties of the university: philosophy, law, medicine, and theology. None of these four figures sits higher or lower than any of the others. None stands over against the others as their teacher. Neither does the church fill this role. Rather, Christ alone is teaching from an open Bible—the Hebrew Scriptures—and the four faculties are listening to him on an equal plane. Christ is thus represented as the teacher of the university as a whole. Neither theology nor philosophy is the queen of the other disciplines, since they, too, are merely individual figures in a semi-circle of four. Only in listening to Christ’s word do the four faculties receive their unifying center. That was Schlink’s thesis.

It is worth noting, too, that none of the four disciplines is listening solely to what Christ is teaching from the Hebrew Scriptures. Each discipline has its own focus and responsibilities in relation to Christ. In this perspective, neither a medieval Aristotelian-scholastic theory of science nor a nineteenth-century idealistic theory of science nor a twentieth-century naturalistic/materialistic theory of science is finally able to create a unity within the university as a universitas totum. Instead, that unity is grounded in a transcendent, theological vision of reality that holds Christ to be
the one in whom God the Creator and human-kind as a whole are reconciled and unified. In this vision, Christ is both the incarnate word of God and the one in whom human beings have their ultimate fulfillment, since he is the savior of all. According to Schlink, this scepter of Heidelberg thus “wishes to express to all of the university faculties the necessity of an attitude of listening to Christ and of learning from him. And through its permanent form, the scepter wishes to proclaim to all coming generations that not only true theology but also the right way of engaging in legal, medical, and philosophical scholarship is impossible without this hearing” (125). Schlink himself noted how strange and radical this assertion is, when that which the scepter represents in its crown is no longer understood to be viable in our modern, pluralistic age, but is seen as merely “an aspect of a long-lost medieval age” (126).

How can Jesus Christ be the teacher of all of the university faculties today, whose number is no longer a mere four but has grown to include many more, and whose participants include non-Protestant Christians, members of other religions, and non-religious faculty and students? Just what does this Jesus have to teach a modern university? What can be learned from a man who 2,000 years ago wandered around from rural village to small hamlet in his native Palestine, who was the friend of tax collectors and prostitutes, and who was the fierce critic of academic theologians (like me!) and pious legal scholars? What can be learned from someone who announced the in-breaking of God’s reign and yet ended up executed as a blasphemer and criminal, and whose followers reported he had appeared to them after his death (127)? What can scientists, law and medical professors, and philosophers learn from this Jesus? After all, Jesus himself was no scientist. He did not write any books. He gave no lectures on the philosophy of nature or on historiography, nor did he engage in legal disputes, not even with the Jewish legal scholars of his day. How is Jesus a teacher for all disciplines in the university today? These were Schlink’s questions, and I would contend they remain living questions, at least in an institution that is formally grounded in a specific Christian tradition of faith, freedom, and scholarship.

Before answering these questions, however, Schlink acknowledged how over the preceding three centuries Christian church leaders had tried to hem in the emerging natural sciences, most infamously through the Inquisition and the trial of Galileo. In Schlink’s view, this was largely due to medieval church politics and a wrong-headed combination of Aristotelian traditionalism and scholastic theology. But Schlink then asked, must listening to the voice of Christ necessarily be a hindrance to scholarly work? He thought not, but he was very clear to stress that Jesus has actually very little to teach us, even if that little is crucial and central to the identity of a university like Heidelberg.

For example, Schlink noted, when the Gospel of John testifies that Jesus is the truth, it means something entirely different from contemporary scientific and philosophical theories about the concept of truth. According to John, Jesus reveals the unverifiable reality of God, a reality that is only recognizable in faith. Similarly, when Luke describes Jesus as a doctor in relation to sickness and healing, he in no way presents Jesus as a medical professor. The sicknesses that Jesus addresses are sins, and the ultimate healing he provides are the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life (126). Moreover, when Paul teaches that the righteousness of God has appeared in Jesus Christ, he
means something different from secular justice in the scholarly field of law, for the gospel is the divine promise of acquittal for sinners (127). So Christ has very little to teach us, and there is much to learn from sources beyond him. Still, what he teaches is essential.

Schlink also minimized Christ's role in the university by stressing the limitations of the philosophy and theology faculties. While philosophy, and not theology, generally held sway as the unifying center of German universities into the nineteenth century, that center, too, did not hold. Instead, tensions and outright divisions occurred between the natural sciences, on the one hand, and the social sciences and the humanities, on the other. Theology was even further sidelined, taking on a more defensive posture, while philosophy was reduced to being merely an individual discipline of less and less importance to doctoral students. (It is interesting to note, as Schlink did, that by the end of the nineteenth century, those who received a Ph.D., a "doctorate in philosophy," in whatever field, rarely actually studied philosophy!)

In place of theology and philosophy, German universities turned to various secular ideologies as a way of unifying the scholarly disciplines. For example, Schlink pointed to so-called scientific positivism. While granting that this ideology or worldview (Weltanschauung) helped to refine scholarly methods that have led to amazing advances in knowledge, he criticized features of this ideological perspective that go beyond the actual practice of the empirical sciences to make judgments about reality as a whole. He was particularly critical of all materialistic and deterministic worldviews, which he held to be inherently reductive, atomizing, and potentially de-humanizing. He was troubled by the inherent necessity in the diverging ideologies of the nineteenth century and early-twentieth century to move from conclusions about empirical data to the positing of sweeping, all-encompassing claims about reality in toto. He did not need to stress this point, since his audience in 1947 was painfully aware of how a political ideology had overtaken all German universities and had forced them into submission. (It is surprising that Schlink did not refer to a similar dynamic that was then occurring in East German universities, where Marxism was beginning to dominate.) In Nazi Germany, this kind of ideological take-over was the case not just in law and medicine, but also in biology, anthropology, sociology, and political theory, not to mention the technical sciences in service to the German military, and yes, philosophy and theology, too. All of this resulted in what Schlink called "the forced unity of the political-ideological university" (133):

All these ideological worldviews are directed against the work of the faculties, for they make the researchers blind to those areas of reality which do not correspond to the individual ideology…. Materialism makes the researcher blind to the distinctive features of life and of human beings, of human community, and of religion; ideological biology [Biologismus] does no less with respect to the spiritual in the widest sense (133).

In Schlink's view, all such ideological worldviews hinder the pursuit of true, scholarly knowledge and lead to the subversion of scholarly work. Such worldviews not only become "the enemies of the university" but "of life itself" (133). As Schlink noted in passing, "Every ideological understanding of human beings cannot avoid having an actual effect on education, the medical treatment of the sick, and political decision-making. Ideologies rule as tyrants and as demonic powers, about which the Bible speaks" (133).

Schlink feared that what had happened to German universities in the 1920s and '30s could happen again. He thought that such a development was a necessary result of modern materialistic, positivistic, atheistic ideologies in scholarly work, and that such ideologies, to the extent that they remain viable, pose an ongoing threat to all universities and to human beings. (One could rightly push back against Schlink at this point by noting how religious ideologies, as totalizing worldviews, can also pose a threat to the academy and to its principle of intellectual freedom.)

So what counsel did he provide to ward off such ideological tyranny? Interestingly, he made use of assertions about the sciences by his fac-
ulty colleague, the atheist Karl Jaspers: “Scientific knowledge is not knowledge of being. For scientific knowledge is particular, directed to certain objects, not to being itself. ... Scientific knowledge cannot provide any goals for living. It does not set forth any valid values. It cannot lead as such. Science cannot answer the question about its own meaning. The fact that science exists is based on impulses which can no longer be scientifically proven to be true and necessary” (133-34, quoting from Jaspers’ book, Die Idee der Universität, 18 [my translation]). These take us to what Jaspers called Grenzfragen, “boundary questions,” the very questions that had disrupted Schlink’s own study of physics and psychiatry and had led him to a Silesian farm. Schlink agreed with the atheist Jaspers that the natural and social sciences are incapable of fully answering questions about the normative principles of jurisprudence or about the ethical responsibilities in the practice of medicine or in the execution of the theoretical and technical sciences. Like Einstein, Schlink held that the natural and social sciences are incapable of fully answering the day-to-day moral and religious questions that arise in actual human living. He stressed, for example (134), that the historical investigation of human rights does not provide an answer to the questions, “What is justice? What are human rights?” Nor does the history of ethics provide an answer to the normative questions, “What is good?” “What is evil?” In Schlink’s view, none of the natural and social sciences can fully or ultimately answer these questions, or others, such as the basic ones, “What is the human being? What is the meaning of human being? What ties humankind together in a human community?” These scientific discoveries and technological advances cannot protect individuals from existential angst and the threats that are arrayed against them, especially the threat of suffering and death, but also the threat from totalizing secular (and, I would add, religious) ideologies. The latter, moreover, need not be so obvious as Nazism or Marxism. Ideologies can work in a more subtle fashion, as happens when universities become nothing more than supermarkets of fragmented knowledge for individual capitalist consumers with no attention to larger questions of worldview, ethics, religious belief, and human meaning. (After twenty years of teaching Christian theology to undergraduate students in a pluralistic church-related university, I remain convinced that this line of inquiry is the best way for them to enter into theological reflection, regardless of their [ir]religious background.)

Precisely in relation to Grenzfragen—and really only at this point—Schlink thought that Christ has something crucial to teach modern universities for the sake of human good and human community. He quoted the 13th-century Franciscan theologian Bonaventure to make the same point. In contrast to Thomas Aquinas, who saw a positive role for the philosophy of Aristotle in the task of theology, the scepter of Heidelberg depicts Bonaventure’s Christocentric vision of the university, grounds the faculties in Christ and his teaching, which frees them to be open to the complex realities of the world, and which leads them to be corrected by these same realities, including the reality of God and the claim of the First Commandment (140). Bonaventure’s vision, as interpreted by Schlink for his post-war audience, is particularly on guard against the intrusion of sinful, distorting ideologies in scholarly activity, but it also stresses that the gospel of Jesus Christ speaks directly and meaningfully to existential
angst, human fears, threats, suffering, and death. Schlink’s vision, which is really a re-articulation of Bonaventure’s, thus sets forth the need for the university to make room for what Christ teaches about sin, grace, forgiveness, love, and justice. Schlink explicitly appealed to the scepter as an abiding visual reminder of this need.

Even if one refuses to trust Christ’s teaching for what it might illuminate about one’s self and the world, the teaching of Christ still summons all members of the university to be united in service to the good of all human beings. This is the summons to be honest and humble about one’s serious limitations and to recognize the need for ongoing change. While many other religious figures in history have offered the same summons, Schlink thought that a university that is grounded in the Christian tradition should concentrate on how it is voiced by Jesus Christ. In this respect, Schlink made two basic theological assertions:

First, Christ breaks open and disrupts the ideological worldviews, philosophical systems, intellectual positions, and theological constructs that people erect to shield themselves from the infinite, the unpredictable, death, and the threat of God (136). Christ destroys all idols, all false gods that human beings fabricate, including, I would add, idols that Christians themselves construct in Christ’s name. Christ then takes hold of individuals in a saving way and frees them to see the reality of this world clearly, with all of its difficulties and complexities. Schlink writes:

Christ sets people free so that they can persist in their inquiries and their researching... He makes us free because in him God reaches out to us, from whose hand no power can snatch us. Hidden in God, people no longer need to deceive themselves, for they no longer need to fear anything, truly anything, any reality outside of God. This is true since “everything is yours, but you are of Christ and Christ is of God” (1 Cor. 3.22f.). It is not the case that the natural and social sciences come to a stop where faith begins. Rather, it is just the opposite: “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.” (136-37)

Schlink’s second assertion is this: Christ commands us to respect all human beings equally as creatures of God, “for Christ is not for me alone but for all” (137). Everyone is my neighbor. In Christ God, the creator is revealed not only as “my creator but as the creator of all human beings” (137), as the creator of the world, of the universe. Every human being is precious to God. So there is no distinction between peoples, races, nations. Christ thus leads the faculties of the university to be concerned for all, especially the weak, the suffering, the marginalized, the poor, the forgotten ones in this tumultuous world. Christ teaches the university not to become enslaved to ideologies or to grow weary in the task of ongoing thinking and researching or to be blinded by idolatry and self-glorification. By forgiving and freeing human beings from sin and all fears, Christ directs the faculties into service for others.

To be sure, there is no such thing as “Christian astronomy” or “Christian mathematics” or perhaps even “Christian philosophy.” Christ does not provide whatever results are given through scholarly research; these are the result of patient, careful, critical, rational work. Christ “places the researcher in his light and frees the researcher for the single-minded, cool-headed realism in which the given legal, medical, philosophical, and scientific disciplines do their work” (137-38). The starting point for that research is, however, crucial, at least in a university that is grounded in the Christian tradition. This starting point is the freedom that Christ establishes. Even the theology faculty at such a university must continually test and evaluate its findings against the Scriptures and their witness to Jesus Christ, and to do so in light of historical and philosophical understanding and in dialogue with the other university disciplines, including those that study Christianity and the other world religions from non-theological perspectives.

Schlink ended his lecture by raising two more questions. First, “In what way does Christian theology serve the other university disciplines?” (139); and second, “In what way do the other faculties serve theology?” (141) With respect to the first question, Schlink underscored his minimalistic position. To be sure, he noted, knowledge in the humanities and the social sciences would be...
imperfect in important respects if the phenomena of religion, including Christianity, found no adequate scholarly consideration in a university. He held, however, that the role of theology in relation to non-theological disciplines is restricted to questions about ideology, worldview, the nature of reality as a whole, the reality of God, the acting force of God, the word of God, and about basic human, religious, and ethical questions that arise in both theology and the other disciplines. While theology can address these issues and questions in dialogue with the other faculties, it cannot supplant or interfere with actual scholarly research. “The Bible as the word of God is a light to our way, not a lexicon for all the possible contents of science” (142).

Conversely, while the non-theological disciplines can help theology in testing and clarifying its knowledge, they cannot prove or demonstrate the truth of Christian faith or supplant the basis of theology in the reality of God and of God’s own acting and addressing. The conviction of Christian faith only comes from the reception of God’s revelation in the prophetic and apostolic witness to Jesus Christ. Even though knowledge in faith does not displace the knowledge gained through philosophy, the sciences, law, and medicine, it and often does influence it. Such a dialogue between theology and the non-theological disciplines invites mutual criticism, especially when the intrusion of ideology interferes with the epistemic processes and supposed conclusions in the sciences and theology, or when science presupposes the rejection of the reality of God and God’s word, or when theology interferes with the epistemic processes and valid conclusions in the sciences. For Schlink (following Bonaventure [1221-74]), the path to true knowledge and wisdom involves both the light of cognition-knowledge in the sciences and the light of God’s critical and life-giving Word. In this vision, one that I think can only be carried out in a university that is grounded in the Christian tradition, both of these lights are necessary for a fuller knowledge and wisdom. The scholarly disciplines receive their status and position in relation to Christ and relate to one another in a semi-circle, as in the Heidelberg scepter.

Schlink’s response to his second question is also quite simple. Beyond providing helpful non-theological knowledge and insights in relation to the data of the Christian religion—all done in faculties beyond theology—if the non-theological disciplines in the university do not call Christian theology and its claims to account on a scientific and scholarly basis, then they too are not fulfilling their service to the university as a whole (141). But there needs to be respectful, critical dialogue for the sake of mutual understanding. Otherwise, the university breaks apart into a chaotic plurality that lacks true community (142). Given his love for music, it is not surprising that at this point Schlink offered an analogy from that domain: a university is operating best when each of its disciplines has its part to play, the sum of which should resemble the polyphony of a symphony (143), not the cacophony of Wall Street. We might extend this analogy further by suggesting that a religiously-grounded university has its distinctive tune to play, a tune that contains all sorts of contrapuntal notes, but whose underlying cantus firmus stems from a specific religious tradition and confession that give the tune its structure, central focus, key themes, and abiding identity.

While I have already hinted at some weaknesses in Schlink’s vision, let me conclude by identifying three abiding strengths. First, Schlink highlighted the challenge that Christian theology faces when it seeks to relate the teaching of Christ to the other truths discovered in the university. Schlink’s actual approach was to allow the light of God’s law, as interpreted and applied by Christ, to expose the radical darkness of sin and evil in human life and creation, to expose the working of God apart from the gospel, so that the light of Christ’s gospel—his gift of forgiveness and Easter—dispels the darkness revealed by the law. Following Bonaventure, Schlink held that the lumen cognitionis sensitivae (the light of knowledge from the senses) and the lumen cognitionis philosophiae (the light of knowledge from philosophy) are ultimately illuminated most profoundly by the one lumen superius scripturae (the light from the higher Scripture)—that is, by the voice of Christ, the Incarnate Word, that speaks both law and gospel from the Scriptures (145-46).
mitment to Lutheran confessional theology with ecumenical openness. The connection to a specific church and confessional tradition is essential for defining the nature, purpose, and character of the specific educational institution as a whole—the cantus firmus and basic melody of the tune that is played there—yet individuals are invited to share their own gifts and character. Perhaps they will riff on the melody, engage in the give-and-take of a jam session, solo now and then, and add their contrapuntal notes to make for a much more richly textured musical offering. Grounded in Christ and the specific confession of his church, Schlink remained open to new theological insights and sought points of agreement with others for the sake of fostering unity in the church and the academy.

Finally, Schlink displayed and encouraged an attitude of intellectual humility within the university. Yes, he returned again and again to the cantus firmus and made sure that the basic theological melody of the Lutheran Confessions was sung and heard in his university, but he also welcomed different tunes and humbly sought harmonies with them. He did so on the basis of Luther's theology of the cross. The humility that grows from that theological insight is a key feature of how he went about doing academic theology. He stressed that all human knowledge, including his own, is limited, fragmented, easily distorted by the power of sin and evil, but also forgiven and renewed by the crucified and risen Christ. Schlink taught and proclaimed Christ crucified, a stumbling block to all religious people and foolishness to all academics.

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Works Cited


Remembering Arlin
The “Gentle Giant” of Christ College and the Lilly Fellows Program

Mark R. Schwehn

TWO DAYS BEFORE ARLIN’S DEATH, THE weekly Lilly Fellows Colloquium met to discuss part of a book entitled Teaching and the Christian Imagination, written by Susan Felch and David Smith in collaboration with some of their colleagues at Calvin College. The book invites readers to consider teaching in terms of three extended metaphors grounded in the Christian Scriptures. The metaphor that we explored that Monday was the image of the teacher as gardener and the classroom as a garden. During that conversation, my mind drifted to memories of Arlin Meyer.

When I first returned to my alma mater, Valparaiso University, in 1983 to take a teaching position in Christ College, my dean was Arlin Meyer. As I was settling in to my new office early one morning, I discovered that Arlin was watering and otherwise tending the garden in the Mueller Hall courtyard. As I watched Arlin do this as part of his morning ritual every day for as long as the weather permitted it, I thought it was simply his own way of unwinding and centering himself. But during Monday's colloquium I came to realize that this gardening was really a preparation for what was in a word Arlin’s life work: teaching.

Almost everything that Arlin Meyer did at Valparaiso University he understood as a form of teaching. He was therefore the most hands-on dean in the history of the University. And Arlin had very big hands. He read all the applications of potential Christ College students himself so he could get to know them even before they arrived by reading their application essays. On the first day of classes he could be seen in the central hallway of Mueller Hall directing bewildered first year students to their appropriate classrooms. He arranged the furniture in the Commons, made sure that all the classroom doors were unlocked, and of course put on the coffee for the faculty and staff. Each semester he would personally do a transcript audit by hand for each and every student to insure they were on schedule to graduate on time. He knew every single student by name, he knew where they were from, and he knew what their majors were. He even knew who the students would be dating before they did. Such a seemingly omniscient and gigantic human being could be a formidable presence to undergraduate students. So Arlin never had to threaten or even cajole to exert discipline. He only had to stand there. Delinquents shaped up quickly in his presence.

This hands-on administrative style extended well beyond his twelve years as dean of Christ College into his equally long tenure as the founding program director of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts. In addition to having to build a national network of church-related colleges and universities, which now numbers around 100, Arlin selected, supported, and mentored scores of Lilly postdoctoral teaching fellows. Five such fellows were present at the colloquium this past Monday. And the book I mentioned that we were studying together was co-authored by a woman whom Arlin had recruited to serve on the board of the Lilly Fellows Program.

Like some of the undergraduates in Christ College, the postdoctoral teaching fellows were
Arlin in his office in 1986.

sometimes startled or intimidated by Arlin. More than one new Lilly Fellow suddenly discovered, on the summer day they were moving into their house in Valparaiso, Arlin Meyer standing in their as-yet unfurnished living room. Astonished of course, and expecting the worst—i.e., that Arlin had come over to inform them that their fellowship had been revoked—they soon became relieved and pleased to learn that Arlin had simply dropped in unannounced to help them move into their new home. He probably carried too many couches in his life. And too many other burdens better borne by others, as well.

Once Arlin had defined for himself the primary tasks of leadership, and once he had construed those tasks as forms of teaching, nothing could distract him from attending to them. He was, for example, oblivious to money. When his beloved administrative assistant Elene Amundsen would occasionally look in his desk drawer to find something or other, she would discover any number of uncashed travel reimbursement checks dating back two or three years. Arlin had about him a kind of massive imperturbability worthy of the great Roman historian Tacitus, who thought that steady composure under all conditions was the supreme virtue.

If you had asked Arlin how much money he was making, he could not have told you. There was something almost other worldly about his lack of concern for material comfort, a fact that seemed marvelous to some but sometimes troublesome to those who had regularly to share some of the resulting discomfort with him.

Arlin had about him a kind of massive imperturbability worthy of the great Roman historian Tacitus, who thought that steady composure under all conditions was the supreme virtue. Arlin was always for Christ College a kind of calm center in the midst of sometimes stormy seas. His neighbor and colleague and good friend Al Trost, who was always filled with intimations of disaster, once proclaimed to Arlin while he was dean that Christ College was about to collapse and was surely on the verge of extinction. Arlin simply changed the subject. Indeed, Arlin's two major strategies for dealing with vexing news were either to change the subject or to seem to suffer from a momentary hearing loss.

Yet Arlin was occasionally moved to acts of sudden and heroic intervention. He once saw from his Linwood House office window large machinery advancing on a row of trees that Arlin had been assured would be spared during the creation of a new parking lot. He rushed from his office, interposed himself between the bulldozers and the threatened trees, and refused to move until the Caterpillar monsters had withdrawn. And at that moment he did seem larger than life, this time the protective gardener rather than the cultivating one. And those trees still stand as a memorial to Arlin's sometimes ferocious tenacity. He was like that great figure Athey Keith in Wendell Berry's novel *Jayber Crow* who risked life and limb to pro-
teet his beloved oak grove from the menacing and inexorable forces of mechanized agriculture. If you did not know Arlin and want to know what he was like, you could do worse than to read that novel and get to know Athey—even though fictional characters always come off as inferior when compared to Arlin. Reading Jayber Crow would be the kind of thing that would have pleased Arlin. In other words, if you want to honor Arlin, read a novel, preferably one by John Updike or Peter DeVries or Wendell Berry.

Imperturbability and determination, as his family knows even more than his colleagues, sometimes shaded into—dare I use the word?—stubbornness. In other words, as Arlin would have

Although his reticence and opacity could be frustrating, his great silences were often signs of virtue. I never heard him speak ill of anyone. He embodied the familiar adage that discretion is the better part of valor. And he always cared much more about others than he did about himself.

been the first to admit, he was no saint. Actually, he probably would not have said this, because he so seldom revealed anything about himself or his own self-understanding. He was like the man in the famous comic sketch by Dave Barry (no relationship to Wendell) who could spend an entire afternoon with several of his closest friends without once mentioning that he had been told the day before that he would by the end of the week have to have one arm and both legs amputated. But although his reticence and opacity could be frustrating, his great silences were often signs of virtue. I never heard him speak ill of anyone. He embodied the familiar adage that discretion is the better part of valor. And he always cared much more about others than he did about himself.

Imperturbability and inscrutability are not traits that ordinarily awaken deep affection in others. Yet seldom in the history of Valparaiso University have so many loved so deeply for so long a particular teacher, much less a particular administrator. Arlin's grandchildren adored him, and still do. And Arlin had a special gift with children, who grew to trust and love him very quickly. So too with Arlin's children and their spouses, with Arlin's students, his colleagues, and his many, many friends. Tributes from around the country have been pouring into Linwood House this week, from former Lilly Fellows and from deans and provosts and department chairs from scores of church-related colleges and universities across the country. The favorite term of endearment among the Lilly Fellows is to refer to Arlin as the gentle giant. The former provost of one large Catholic university on the East Coast said that Arlin's invitation to him to serve on the Lilly National Network Board and his subsequent friendship with Arlin thereafter were at the very top of his memories in higher education.

And then, of course, there is Arlin's beloved wife, Sharon. Like all marriages, theirs was driven by its own peculiar dynamic. One dimension of their teamwork profoundly shaped Christ College, which had virtually no entertainment budget while Arlin was dean. And Arlin was both lavishly hospitable and stringently parsimonious at the same time. This seeming contradiction was possible to maintain only because of Sharon. In the years that Arlin was dean, Sharon made enough ham roll-ups to feed the proverbial 5,000 and have many more than 12 baskets left over. And Arlin mobilized the full range of Sharon's many gifts. She often hosted visiting scholars and job candidates, showing them around the town of Valparaiso and fielding whatever non-academic questions they might have about either the university community or the whole northwest Indiana region. Arlin and Sharon were a team from beginning to end.

So how did this calm, quiet, large, and mysterious man elicit such deep and widespread affection? In many ways, I suppose, but primarily I think through his unique practice of the hermeneutics of love. This is a fancy way of saying that Arlin knew in his bones that we must love in order
to understand. And he exercised this principle both on people and on texts. Arlin understood something vitally important about teaching literature that was as much a product of his Christian formation as it was of his professional training. It is good to teach students how to read, but it is much better to teach them to love reading. Indeed, for Arlin, without the love, one could never really learn to read well. Love is never sufficient by itself for understanding. But without love, without that special hunger for unity with the subject under study, certain truths about a text will remain forever obscure regardless of the amount of disciplined attention lavished upon them. And love takes time. What some mistook for excessive deliberation, an almost lumbering Meyer movement through various texts, was really a planned effort to maintain the proper pace of love as it blossomed through discipline into critical appreciation and then eventually ripened into profound understanding.

Because of this hermeneutics of love, applied by Arlin equally to books and to students, the pinnacle of his teaching experience from his vantage point was located in Cambridge, England, where he spent two years as the director of Valpo's Cambridge Program. The cohorts of students he taught there 40 years ago still hold annual reunions at the Meyer home and elsewhere. And because Arlin was always such an Anglophile, he would have welcomed today, I think, being compared to the central character in the best-selling British novel of the 1930s and 1940s, a beloved teacher named Mr. Chipping (known affectionately by students as Mr. Chips), who taught for many years at a British boys' public boarding school located in the fictional village of Brookfield, in the Fenlands, and who came into his own as a teacher only with the help of his wife.

Like Chips, Arlin Meyer resolutely—or should we say stubbornly—resisted many social and technological changes that to his mind came between him and his students and colleagues. He much preferred walking around campus in order to talk to folks face-to-face over using that device he never mastered: the telephone. Indeed, he never did learn how to check his voice mail messages from off campus. And as for the internet and email and all of the rest of those contraptions that to him fostered a harried way of life and that threatened to fray the bonds of community, these to Arlin seemed somehow inimical to learning in ways that he could not have fully specified but that he knew in his heart. Distance learning to him was a contradiction in terms.

So Arlin will remain a monument of warning against the hasty, the inconsiderate, the slapdash, the tawdry, the careless, the gimmick, the shortcut, the perfunctory and the superficial. He belonged largely to a vanished world, but it was a world that many of us—those old enough to remember—once loved almost as much as we still love Arlin. And so it is that we bid adieu to our own flesh-and-blood teacher, a gardener of souls, who first appeared almost a hundred years ago as a fictional character in the Anglo-American literary world that Arlin Meyer loved so much.

Goodbye, Mr. Chips.

Mark R. Schwehn is professor of Humanities in Christ College, the Honors College of Valparaiso University. He is the founding project director of the Lilly Fellows Program, and he followed in the footsteps of Arlin Meyer, becoming dean of Christ College in 1990. He delivered this remembrance at Arlin's memorial service on February 24, 2017.
PRELUDE TO CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

There was the pelican who snagged her feet in the ocean, & white gulls that clotted near crusts of foam. Before that, a blindfold of cloud stretched from horizon ear to ear. Before that, the moon on the tesseral water. Cuban bread & Spanish wine. A stand that sold gourmet popsicles. A word in my throat when I looked at him. The sigh of sheets on the line, the sigh of sheets moving & still with us. Perhaps I've gone too far—the distance between begin & begun is the upturned world before the retina translates. Already I’m too late. Already you have moved from your fallopian dark to the blooded sanctum where you root. The earthly currents begin to swish through you. It is as though my skin is an eave against which a curled bird begins to stir.

Chelsea Wagenaar
We have seen an expanding public dialogue in recent years about the value of the liberal arts. This includes books such as Fareed Zakaria’s In Defense of a Liberal Education (2015) and campaigns such as the Council of Independent Colleges’ “Securing America’s Future: The Power of Liberal Arts Education” (2016). Initiatives such as these have reached a national audience and prompted scores of debates, symposia, and conferences. I have participated, and will continue to participate, in these types of activities. But it often seems that there is a missing element in this dialogue, and that is the further exploration of the role of professional education.

To be sure, there are often references to professional education in these conversations, but at times it is alluded to as part of the problem. Zakaria states, “The liberal arts are under attack… Politicians have taken the lead in questioning the worth of humanities for the nation’s workforce…this heavy vocational (job related) focus is shortsighted and limiting. Specific vocational knowledge is often outdated in a few years.”

To some degree, the campaign to advance liberal arts has created a separation between liberal and professional education. But perhaps a constructive strategy might be more effective: integrating liberal and professional education grounded in practice as well as in mission.

My own journey toward this view began during undergraduate studies in nursing at Loyola University Chicago. While nursing is a professional degree, the focus on the liberal arts, particularly in general education, has had a lifelong effect on me, as it does for so many graduates of Jesuit universities.

After practicing nursing for a few years, I returned to graduate school to become a nursing educator. The focus of my dissertation was not nursing but public policy. As I had quickly learned, while professional nursing education is essential, it is not enough. Issues of social inequity, poverty, culture, and politics play an equal role in health care. The integration of the liberal arts into my professional education had quickly found its way into practice.

Eventually I became a tenured professor and after some time I found myself in a variety of administrative roles, including for the past 16 years my current role as a provost. Once again, I was reminded of the importance of professional learning in fields such as business, human resources, and technology—but never without the integration of liberal learning.

For example, you cannot be an effective administrator without the understanding of systems theory. I learned this in nursing. When there is something wrong with the heart, you can be sure it has an effect on the kidneys and lungs. Nothing exists alone. So too, one’s thinking as an administrator has to be systems-based and interdisciplinary, drawing together principles and concepts from such disciplines as philosophy, sociology, and political science. To look only at the immediate problem is to miss much.

Liberal learning has enriched my role as an administrator in other ways. When dealing with a personnel issue, for example, I often find myself musing lines from Shakespeare: “The quality of
mercy is not strained / it droppeth as the gentle rain from the heaven, upon the place beneath. It is twice blest / it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.

And when I occasionally find myself in a meeting that seems to go on into eternity—although these meetings have not yet ended in death—I can't help but take an existential moment to recall

In a faith-based institution....

Faculty should be competent in their disciplinary knowledge but also be able to teach in a way that leads to an exploration of meaning and values. Liberal and professional learning together provide the real life, practical, holistic context in which this exploration can take place.

Thornton Wilder's novel The Bridge of San Louis Rey. I ask myself what brings this particular group of people together at this time and on this day, and how did we arrive at this moment?

And when the significant disruption we are currently experiencing in higher education becomes really confusing and challenging, Durkheim's concept of anomie helps me to consider the situation in a different way.

And finally, regarding communication, I know that the message is important, but I also remember that it is not just what people say, but what and how people hear. Thus, as I choose how to communicate, I am often reminded of Marshall McLuhan's words, “The medium is also the message.”

In addition to these examples, an administrator needs knowledge of a range of disciplines in the arts and sciences to be effective. I am fortunate to work at a university that understands and values the integration of liberal arts and professional learning. This emphasis comes from the university's mission. The Lewis University mission reads, “Guided by our Catholic and Lasallian heritage, we provide to a diverse student population, programs for a liberal and professional education, grounded in the interaction of knowledge and fidelity, in the search for truth.”

Allow me to unpack this. I am not a theologian, but I understand that the mission of most faith-based universities is directed toward the search for truth. Our role as educators is to help students understand that God as Ultimate Reality is encountered in all of creation. Creation is dynamic, yet ordered, and thus open to inquiry. This leads us toward a continuous exploration and understanding of the meaning of life.

To this end, the students' understanding of “liberal and professional education” needs to be coupled with the “interaction of knowledge and fidelity.” In a faith-based institution, it is not enough to come away with only knowledge; rather, there is a need to integrate that knowledge with fidelity. Faculty should be competent in their disciplinary knowledge, but also be able to teach in a way that leads to an exploration of meaning and values. Liberal and professional learning together provide the real life, practical, holistic context in which this exploration can take place. To address the development of the “complete person,” as our mission states, is to take into consideration both aspects of learning.

Let me give you an example. Over the years, I have taught graduate classes in health care policy. It is important that students learn about health care finance, regulations, policies, and law. But that knowledge base is not enough. Equally important is fidelity. One must also ask questions such as, “What are you committed to?” “What are the principles, values, and ethics that guide your use of this knowledge?” In terms of health care, for example, how much of your overall hospital budget should be directed toward the poor? How do you address issues in the community that contribute to illness? What happens when you discharge someone from the hospital who does not have the resources for self-care?

While it is not the professor’s responsibility to answer the questions, she or he must challenge
students to consider the values inherent in their new knowledge and to integrate that learning into their own search for truth. This is the core of the integration of liberal and professional learning. This interaction is necessary in the search for truth.

At Lewis, our appreciation for the integration of liberal and professional learning stems from a tradition that dates back more than 350 years. John Baptist de La Salle founded the Christian Brothers, the religious institute that sponsors Lewis University. De La Salle founded schools in 17th-century France that welcomed poor students as well as wealthy ones. From the beginning, the schools were pragmatic and offered an integrated curriculum of both religious and secular instruction. They also provided an opportunity to learn professional skills. For example, a school might teach navigation if it was near a seaport. The dignity of work, a key concept of Catholic intellectual thought, has always been important in Lasallian schools, and it remains in place in the sixty plus Lasallian universities around the world.

There are several examples of the integration of liberal and professional learning I would like to share. I recall an interaction many years ago when, at dinner the night before fall convocation, the keynote speaker asked several Lewis faculty members on the planning committee how he might address the normal faculty tension between liberal arts and the professions. His dinner companions paused, looked at each other, and responded, "What tension?" The integration of liberal and professional education, in the search for truth, is at the core of our mission.

Many years ago when I arrived at Lewis, there was never a question of whether my discipline of professional nursing education fit into the overall educational goals of the university. Faculty from various professional disciplines served on the general education renewal committee with those from the humanities, social and physical sciences, and all of our perspectives were well respected.

We all participated in something called "semester themes," in which faculty from various departments engaged in presentations on major topics. One year the topic was the sun. Each discipline had a particular perspective, and it was amazing how much both the students and the faculty learned from each other. Today, that tradition continues through our Arts and Ideas program, which brings together faculty and students to reflect on various fine arts, professional, and topical interests in an annual series of campus offerings. Over the past several years, faculty have delivered interdisciplinary presentations on subjects such as food and violence.

The Lowell Stahl Center for Entrepreneurship and Real Estate at Lewis University provides opportunities to compete for funding for innovative products. In one of the projects, faculty members from chemistry, art, and business worked together to create a solar panel that was functional, aesthetically beautiful, and potentially marketable.

This semester, faculty from biology, chemistry, physics, and history are working with a theologian to teach a seminar in science and faith. These types of collaborations serve as a venue to share our talents and perspectives in light of our mission.

In higher education, we need to work together because we value the opportunity to learn from each other and create things for the betterment of others that are greater than any one of our parts. We need to work together because it allows us to more fully address the integration of knowledge with values, in our own work, and in our teaching. And we need to work together because this is how students best learn to reflect, to serve others, and to clarify their values, and to prepare for the world of work.

Yes we continue to face challenges to making this integration successful. For example, students do not always understand the full value of general education requirements. We need to help them better understand. We also need to more effectively address the integration of these courses into their professional majors.

An additional challenge professional programs face is the increasing number of accreditation requirements. These requirements take time away from interdisciplinary coursework, dialogue, and reflection. Despite these challenges however, the transition to integrative learning is prevailing.

In the Association of American Colleges &
Universities monograph *Faculty Leadership for Integrative Liberal Learning* (2015), Ann Ferren and David Paris aptly observe that in this environment, “faculty in the arts and sciences programs increasingly realize the necessity and desirability of addressing students’ career concerns, and faculty in the preprofessional and vocational programs likewise realize the value of grounding their work in a broad liberal education.”

Just last year, the integration of both liberal and professional learning has come to the forefront of these discussions in William M. Sullivan’s book, *The Power of Integrated Learning* (2016). The book received praise from Richard Ekman, president of Council of Independent Colleges, who said, “It is possible for a college to provide high quality education in both the liberal arts and the professions, and . . . this admixture also can increase the exercise of civic responsibility by students.” And Carol Geary Schneider, past president of the Association of American Colleges & Universities, said that this organization has “declared integrative learning the ‘21st century liberal art.’” This concept provides compelling evidence that creating connections across disciplines, between the liberal arts and professional studies, and between the college and the wider community is the most powerful way to help students chart a course for life and develop their capacities to make a positive difference in the wider world” (2016).

“Chart a course for life” and “make a positive difference in the wider world”—those sound like the mission statements of many of our universities. I am happy to note that of the 25 institutions Sullivan features in *The Power of Integrated Learning*, several are members of the LFP National Network.

This is a new phase in the advancement of liberal learning. We have come to understand that coupling liberal arts with professional education provides the context for both critical and practical learning opportunities. Addressing both together, as we integrate knowledge with faith and values, facilitates the learning that best reflects our missions. And, after all, the pursuit of our missions is our common goal.

Stephany Schlacter is provost of Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois. This essay was adapted from a talk she gave at the Lilly Fellows Program 2016 Workshop for Senior Administrators at Augsburg College in Minneapolis.
GOD THE GORILLA OR WOLF

God the gorilla or wolf
Who cannot be named
Who sits preening me, cracking
lice, upping the shine
Who knocks me over
with His teeth
and expressionless lips
Who noses the soft parts underneath
Who rages at my bellygod
at my other beloveds
Who sets out his own feast
Who row by row across
the unearthly white
of the scalp scrapes up
what He can eat
Who numbers my hands, my eyes
Who has motherhen guile
Who cannot be distant only
Who will not play by my rules

Jeffrey Galbraith
Jesuit Higher Education in the Age of Pope Francis

Peter Ely, S.J.

No one was more surprised at the election of a Jesuit Pope than the Jesuits themselves. We never thought that was a possibility. It would certainly have surprised Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, who didn't even want Jesuits to become bishops at all, let alone the Bishop of Rome. So when the news came on March 13, 2013, that Jorge Bergoglio, an Argentine Jesuit, had been elected pope and taken the name Francis—not in honor of the Jesuit Francis Xavier but of the Franciscan Francis of Assisi—we were startled, and more than a little nervous, too.

Bergoglio, who had become the provincial superior of the Argentine Jesuits at the age of 36, was known as a polarizing superior who had left the Argentine province deeply divided after his six-year term of office. What Bergoglio himself admits is that he was quite “authoritarian” during his years in leadership of the Province.

Whatever surprise came from the choice of this particular Jesuit was rooted in a deeper disbelief, developed and confirmed over a long history, that any Jesuit would be elected pope. In the years since the order’s founding in 1540, relations between the Roman pontiff and the Jesuits have swung between warm support on the one hand to strong disapproval on the other. One pope early on tried to get the Society to change its fundamental character as a new kind of religious order in the Catholic Church, an order not bound by the monastic practices of common recitation of the Divine Office and stability of location. He would have required Jesuits to meet several times a day, as monks do, to recite the Divine Office. Ignatius, on the other hand, wanted Jesuits to be free to move wherever they had to without being tied down to one place. This pope died, of natural causes—perhaps with the aid of the Holy Spirit, some Jesuits thought—before he was able to see his plan through.

Then, in 1773, about 230 years after the founding of the Jesuits, Pope Clement XIV gave in to pressure from European monarchs and completely suppressed the Jesuits worldwide. That abolition of the order lasted forty-one years, until 1814. Even before this, the kings of Portugal, France, and Spain had already expelled all Jesuits from their territory and confiscated their considerable properties. Many forces other than the papacy itself were involved in liquidating the Jesuits, but this is the prime example of the knotty historical relationship between Jesuits and the papacy that made it seem unlikely that a Jesuit would ever be elected to the office.

What the Papacy of Pope Francis Has Meant for Jesuits

Pope Francis, in his style of governing, his simplicity, and his humility has made a deep impression on the world. The profoundly symbolic gestures of his first few hours as pope, beginning with his disarmingly simple “Bona Sera” (“Good Evening”) at his first appearance on the balcony of St. Peter’s; the surprising request that people pray for him before he even gave his first papal blessing; his insistence on taking the shuttle bus with the other cardinals from the conclave that had elected him to personally pay his hotel bill; his refusal to live in the papal palace in the Vatican—all of these
signaled a new, more modest exercise of papal authority, and have made him perhaps the most accessible Bishop of Rome in modern times.

In October 2013, a few months after his election, he had an interview with the well-known atheist founder of the Italian journal *La Repubblica*. As the interview began both men traded “accusations” that each of them would try to convert the other. That was just an opening joke, but Francis responded in all seriousness: “Convert you? Proselytism is solemn nonsense. You have to meet people and listen to them.” This attitude of openness and willingness to listen has had a profound impact on people of all faiths and of no faith around the world.

Francis is very much a Jesuit in his style of governance, and his celebrated exaltation of the works of mercy over enforcing doctrinal orthodoxy also has characterized the Jesuits through most of their history. In Jesuit universities there has long been a resounding affirmation among lay faculty and staff of the Jesuit charism, along with a suspicion about the larger Catholic Church. As one witty saying has it, “Jesuit, sì; Catholic, not so sure!” Having a Jesuit pope helps to overcome this dichotomy. All of a sudden being Catholic and being Jesuit seem not so far apart.

Francis has also inspired Jesuit education, especially Jesuit higher education, to go further in a direction we have already taken. There is a natural tendency in university life to concentrate primarily on careers. People get degrees in order to get to a better place professionally. The notion of vocation easily gets lost, even in religiously grounded universities. Pope Francis, by his constant calls to mercy, calls us beyond that. So how was Jesuit spirituality transformed into a distinctive educational vision? And how was that educational vision incarnated into a widespread system of schools and universities? First, the Ignatian vision from the beginning contained elements that disposed it toward incorporation into an educational vision. And yet that transposition was quite unintentional: it happened only as the result of a series of accidents that seem happy in retrospect.

Ignatian or Jesuit Spirituality begins, as most spiritualities do, in the life of a founder. Ignatius or Inigo of Loyola, the youngest son of a noble Basque family, was born in 1491, about eight years after Martin Luther, and he died in 1556, ten years after Luther. Inigo lived the first part of his life as a courtier to the chief treasurer of the kingdom of France. His spiritual experience came as an outcome of ordinary events in his life. When he returned to Spain, he gathered a group of companions and started an educational institute that became a foundation of Christian education. After his death, his writings were collected and organized, and the Spiritual Exercises came into being as a guide for individuals seeking the will of God. The Educational Exercises were developed from these Spiritual Exercises and were used to guide the formation of young men in the Jesuit Order.

Ignatian spirituality, which is essentially a way of seeking and finding the will of God, shares much with other forms of Christian spirituality, but it has some key defining characteristics. And the educational vision of Ignatius and his followers provides the fundamental inspiration and principles that have guided the development of one of the most extraordinary systems of education in human history. So education in the mind of Ignatius was essentially an extension of the same goal as his spirituality.

What I want to call attention to here is that any faithful spirituality does not necessarily produce an educational vision. That kind of development is not to be taken for granted. Many types of spirituality, genuinely magnificent ones, have not been translated into an educational vision in the thoroughgoing way that Ignatian spirituality has.

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Ignatian or Jesuit Spirituality begins, as most spiritualities do, in the life of a founder. Ignatius or Inigo of Loyola, the youngest son of a noble Basque family, was born in 1491, about eight years after Martin Luther, and he died in 1556, ten years after Luther. Inigo lived the first part of his life as a courtier to the chief treasurer of the kingdom.
of Castile. His fortunes began to change when Charles V became king of Spain and Ignatius lost his patronage at the court. The crucial event that led to his conversion occurred when a cannonball shattered Ignatius’ leg at the Battle of Pamplona, during a Spanish war with France. During the long period of recovery in the family castle, Ignatius was gradually weaned from his longstanding love of chivalric literature. The only books available to him were a book on the life of Christ and another on the lives of the saints. But even without access to his chivalrous books, Ignatius still dreamed of doing great deeds of chivalry, including rescuing beautiful maidens in distress. For some time he would alternate between such chivalric dreams and his more sober religious readings. Gradually, however, he noticed that the dreams of heroic adventure, enjoyable as they were at first, led to boredom and even disgust. The lives of Christ and the saints, on the other hand, not only gave him pleasure while reading them but continued to inspire him even after reading. This would be the beginning of what would become a central feature of Ignatian spirituality, the “discernment of spirits.” Gradually Ignatius learned to distinguish the fruits of the Holy Spirit as Paul describes them in Galatians—“love, joy, peace, patience …”—from the effects of the “enemy of our human nature,” as he would call the evil spirit, or Satan. So Ignatius’ long conversion experience began when he discovered that he could tell if a certain course of action derived from the “good Spirit” or the “evil spirit” by observing where it led.

This spiritual journey continued when Ignatius traveled from his home in the west of Spain to Manresa, near Barcelona, in eastern Spain, where he spent a year learning how to live a more spiritual life. Instead of living for himself, as he had done before his conversion, Ignatius wanted now to live for God. Whereas before he had been concerned with what he could do for himself, he now turned his attention to what he could do for God. Though undoubtedly embodying a far superior orientation of his life, this second stage suffered from one basic flaw: it was about what he would do. During his year at Manresa, however, Ignatius gradually learned a lesson very similar to what Martin Luther also learned: that the spiritual life was not ultimately about what we can do for God, but what God does in and for us, and in us for other people.

Ignatius learned that lesson from his particularly painful encounter with “scruples.” No matter how often he confessed his sins, he never felt he had done so in a way that would earn him forgiveness. For a while he thought the problem was solved when his confessor told him not to confess anything of the past “unless,” in Ignatius’ words, “it was something quite clear. But since he found all these things to be very clear, this order was of no use to him, and so he continued with the difficulty” (Autobiography, Ch 3, no. 23). The aspiring believer went around and around, trapped in the conviction that salvation depended on the quality of his own efforts.

Finally, Ignatius learned to put his confidence in God’s mercy in Christ, rather than in his own efforts. He now recognized his persistent “scruples” regarding his own sinfulness as also the work of the evil spirit, since they led to discouragement, even thoughts of suicide. “In this way,” Ignatius tells us, “the Lord deigned that he awake, as if from sleep. Since he now had some experience of the diversity of spirits from the lessons God had given him, he began to examine the means by which that spirit had come. He thus decided with great lucidity not to confess anything from the past anymore; and so from that day forward he remained free of those scruples and held it for certain that Our Lord had mercifully deigned to deliver him.” What Ignatius could not bring about through his own prolonged efforts of prayer, fasting, and penance, God brought about in him.

Does this remind you of Luther’s struggle with the notion of “the justice of God”? Luther first thought it meant “the justice by which God judges us,” but then came to see, in his so-called “Tower Experience,” that it meant “the justice by which God makes us just.” “I meditated night and day;” Luther tells us, “on those words [the justice of God] until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: ‘The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: “The just person lives by faith.”’ I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person
lives by a gift of God, that is, by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e., that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: “The just person lives by faith.”

This convergence between the vision of Ignatius—a vision vindicated at the Council of Trent—and Luther’s central insight into his own experience is one indication of the increasingly deep unity of vision between Catholic and Lutheran Christianity regarding Justification, a unity of vision that has been expressed in our time in the Catholic-Lutheran “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” of 1999.

During his year in Manresa, Ignatius also began to record his experiences in what would eventually become his most famous and influential work, The Spiritual Exercises, which is essentially a manual for people desiring to explore their own inner spirit in the light of the Gospel. Ignatius compares spiritual exercises with physical ones: “Just as taking a walk, traveling on foot, or running are physical exercises, so is the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul” (Spiritual Exercises, no.1).

Actually, that language is deceptive. It is not, as Ignatius had already discovered, we who deliver ourselves of our “disordered affections,” but God who delivers us when we turn to him. This removing of disordered affections we might better call “interior freedom.” The Exercises, which are divided into four “weeks” corresponding to four crucial phases in the Gospel, offer meditations and prayers designed to allow the retreatant to enter into the mystery of the saving action of Jesus Christ. The Exercises are not a book to be read but a lived journey into the heart of Jesus.

Six features of Ignatian spirituality in general, and from Ignatius’ Exercises in particular, constitute the foundation of an educational vision: interior freedom, the discernment of spirits, imagination, spiritual affectivity, desire, and gratitude. First, interior freedom is a state of equilibrium, achieved in the overcoming of disordered attachments, that allows one to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It is the primary condition for discernment. Discernment of spirits allows one to develop a habit of recognizing the actions of the good Spirit and the evil spirit. Ignatius provides for three times when such a discernment can be made: first, when a person is overwhelmed by a personal manifestation of God such that “a devout soul without hesitation, or the possibility of hesitation, follows what has been manifested to it” (74); second, “when much light and understanding are derived through experience of desolations and consolations and discernment of different spirits” (74); and third, in a time of tranquility “when the soul is not being moved one way and the other by various spirits” and uses its natural faculties in freedom and peace.

That second category, reflecting on our experience of “desolations and consolations,” is especially important. One of the most distinctive characteristics of Ignatian spirituality is the close attention it gives to human emotions, looking on them as a means whereby God’s will can be made manifest through careful reflection, rather than as disturbances to be put aside. This habit of allowing the will of God to emerge through and in our deepest feelings is not only characteristic of Ignatius’ spirituality, but eventually came to mark his educational vision as well. This particular form of discernment opens the way for a close integration of the heart and the head, of emotion and thought, an integration that has been at the core of Jesuit education.

A third characteristic of Jesuit spirituality
that emerges from the *Exercises* is the use of the imagination. In order to draw the person making the Exercises into the mysteries of Christ, Ignatius insists on the importance of the imagination. When contemplating the mystery of Jesus' birth, for instance, Ignatius suggests that the exercitant enter imaginatively into the scene, “to see the persons, that is to see Our Lady, Joseph, the maidservant, and the Infant Jesus after his birth. I will make myself a poor, little, and unworthy slave, gazing on them, contemplating them, and serving them in their needs, just as if I were there, with all possible respect and reverence. Then I will reflect on myself to draw some profit.” (114) This way of imagining can have extraordinary effects when it moves from an activity in which we arrange the scene to a passivity in which the characters take over and we open ourselves to becoming the recipients of something deep in our subconscious. In a way it is an entry into the emotional logic of dreams, but done in a state of wakefulness, not sleep. For example, one Jesuit priest following this method suddenly felt a desire to pick up the baby Jesus, but felt he was unable to do so. His director instructed him to go back to the scene. When he did, Our Lady picked up the child and placed it in the astonished priest's arms. He recounted the story with deep feeling.

A fourth characteristic of the Exercises is spiritual affectivity. Ignatius calls the retreatant to a kind of loving intimacy with God the Father, with Jesus, and with Mary. The description above of the role of imagination offers an example of this emotional quality. But Ignatius also invites the retreatant at key points to enter into a loving “colloquy” with Jesus or Mary, and thus to speak directly to them. The recurrent prayer of the Second Week, for instance, is “to ask for an interior knowledge of our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely” (104).

This mention of the “colloquy” brings up a closely related fifth point, the importance of desire. The purpose of the colloquy is “to ask for what I desire.” That will change in each meditation. In the First Week the person asks for sorrow for his or her sins; in the second—as we have seen—for an interior knowledge of Christ; in the Third Week the plea is for sorrow with Christ in his suffering; and in the Fourth Week, for joy in the resurrected life of Christ. Ignatius was himself a man of strong desires and great ambition. But what had been a form of worldly competitiveness in his youth as a noble and a soldier had become a desire in the now-spiritual pilgrim to move ever more deeply into the mystery of Christ and to respond more fully to His call. This characteristic of Ignatian spirituality eventually became integral to his order’s educational vision. Jesuit education calls students to lofty goals, ardently pursued.

The sixth characteristic is gratitude. The culminating theological vision of the Spiritual Exercises appears in the Contemplation ad Amorem, “Contemplation on Love.” In this contemplation Ignatius calls retreatants to immerse themselves in and be overwhelmed with gratitude for the love of God that pours into us from all sides. “I will consider,” Ignatius says, “how God labors and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth; that is, he acts in the manner of one who is laboring.” (Sp Ex, #236). This extraordinary vision of the relationship of God with each individual calls those making this contemplation to an intense awareness of God at work in the whole world, but also intimately in each of them, as specific individuals. The intended effect of this contemplation at the very end of the Exercises is an overwhelming gratitude for the goodness of God poured out into creation, and poured out especially into me personally. This world-affirming, personal religious vision would become the cornerstone of Ignatius’ educational vision.
of the Holy Land’s sacred sites, with jurisdiction from Rome, had other ideas, and they “invited” Ignatius to leave because of the “dangers.” He did manage to visit Mount Olivet from which Jesus was thought to have ascended by giving away his penknife to the guards. In the end Ignatius accepted the authority of the Church invested in the Franciscans and left Jerusalem.

At this point in his autobiography, Ignatius gives a surprisingly modest indication of a decision that eventually led to the system of education that would become the principal work of Jesuits. “After the pilgrim realized,” he tells us, “that it was not God’s will that he remain in Jerusalem, he continually pondered within himself what he ought to do. Eventually he was rather inclined to study for some time so he would be able to help souls...” (Autobiography, 50).

“Eventually he was rather inclined...” is not a very firm statement of purpose. But the phrase “to help souls” expresses the underlying motivation of Ignatius’ spirituality, the motivation that would also ground his educational vision. When Ignatius launched himself in this new direction he could not have understood its importance. He could not have understood, for instance, that he was stepping onto the ancient path opened up in the early centuries of the Christian Church, when Tertullian and Cyril of Alexandria disputed over the question of whether the secular learning of the Greeks could have anything to do with the revelation of the Bible. Tertullian thought that secular “Athens” had nothing to do with holy “Jerusalem.” Cyril argued that God had given philosophy to the Greeks just as he had given revelation to the Jews and Christians. Nor did Ignatius know about Augustine and the inspiration he drew from the Platonists, or about the development of scholasticism and the rise of universities, or about Thomas Aquinas and his use of Aristotle. He probably didn’t even know at this point anything about the extraordinary intellectual revolution in his own time that we call Renaissance humanism. Yet his own school system would be located at the heart of this great cultural transformation.

A crucial ingredient in the transformation of Ignatius’ spirituality into an educational vision was his own education. When he left the Holy Land, he was not at the point of elaborating an educational vision. But the aristocratic soldier, now faithful believer, did seek to further his own education, which had previously been quite limited. The “Pilgrim,” as he called himself, came back to Barcelona and sat down, at the age of 35 or 36, to study Latin with schoolboys. He then attended the Spanish universities of Alcalá and Salamanca, where, by his own admission, he tried to “advance with such haste in studies [that] he found himself very deficient in fundamentals” (Autobiography, 73). Finally, in the year 1528, at the age of 37, Ignatius went to France to begin his studies in earnest, following the “order and method” of the prestigious University of Paris, which would become foundational in the school system he would eventually set up. During these years in Paris, Ignatius also met the first seven devout “companions” who would earn their master’s degrees with him. Together, they pronounced vows of poverty and chastity in the year 1534, a year before they completed their studies.

When they had finished at the university the group traveled in different directions, reuniting in 1536 in Venice, where three more companions joined them. After a long process of discernment, the ten decided to bind themselves together by a vow of obedience. Ignatius became the first superior and remained in that position until he died in 1556. Once again the possibility of ministry in the Holy Land surfaced, probably at the urging of Ignatius. The ten companions therefore agreed to set sail for Cyprus and then Jerusalem, provided
that a ship became available to take them. If no ship came, however, their backup plan was to travel to Rome to present themselves to the Pope and offer to undertake whatever mission he might have in mind for them. As luck, or divine providence, would have it, no ship was available that year. So once again, by accident, the mission to the Holy Land was ruled out and the companions turned to Rome.

The central point here is that no plan for entering into the field of education had arisen among the companions. This seems strange. All of the first ten companions had prestigious master's degrees from the University of Paris, the preeminent university of the time. Yet for many years the companions showed no inclination or ambition to found or teach in schools. I have often asked myself why that was so. The simplest answer may be that running schools simply wasn't what religious orders of the time did. In fact, no true system of schools existed at all. So the idea simply wasn't on their radar.

The idea of schools for lay people—Jesuits had already begun to offer instruction to their own younger members—first came into view when the civic leaders of Messina, Italy, approached Ignatius to ask if he could establish schools for their young men, similar to what he had developed for men joining the Jesuits. Ignatius saw this as an opportunity. He responded immediately and sent to Messina ten Jesuits, four ordained priests, and six un-ordained "scholastics," as they were called. He assigned some of his most talented Jesuits for this work. Within a few months the senate of the city of Palermo asked for a similar school and got it.

The idea of Jesuit schools then quickly took off. By the time of Ignatius' death in 1556 there were thirty-three such schools, and another six had been approved. By the time of the Society's suppression in 1773 there were 669 schools and 176 seminaries across Europe as well as in Latin America and Asia. Fr. John O'Malley, the preeminent U.S. historian of the Jesuits, calls this burst of educational innovation the "second founding" of the Jesuits (O'Malley, Jesuits, 115-116).

What amazes me is that this "second founding" of the Jesuits, the launching of their educational enterprise, took place without any extended discernment or developed plan on the part of Ignatius or his companions. Why was it so easy? The answer, in my view, is because they were already poised for this decision. The spirituality of Ignatius already contained within itself the ingredients of a powerful educational vision, although it was not understood as such by them. The ingredients were catalyzed, synthesized, and activated as if in a chemical process by the simple request that they begin a school. The cadre of educated Jesuits, equipped with their Paris degrees, would now begin to elaborate an educational vision even as they put it into practice.

**What were the distinctive characteristics of these schools, and how did the educational vision they embodied reflect the Ignatian spirituality out of which it came?** I find the following eight the most important. First, there is a great clarity about the ultimate religious purpose of Jesuit education. Ignatius expresses this tersely in the Constitutions: "The objective which the Society of Jesus directly seeks is to aid its own members and their fellow men to attain the ultimate end for which they were created. To accomplish this, besides the example of one's life, learning and a method of expounding it are necessary." And this ultimate end is "to know and serve better God, our Creator and Lord." Needless to say, this is a challenging educational goal in our contemporary context.

The second characteristic is the integration of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects of education. "Solid learning and virtue" is a phrase often seen in the early documents, along with "the close harmonious union of instruction and character formation," or the "necessity for teachers to train their pupils in Christian virtue no less than in learning." This was already a characteristic of the broad movement of Renaissance humanism, which the Jesuit eagerly embraced. A third characteristic was and is "formation" of persons rather than the mere provision of "information." I would also add "transformation."

A fourth characteristic, connected with the education the first Jesuits had received at Paris, was an "order and method," or organized curriculum, that was both rigorous and flexible. A
fifth and highly important characteristic was that students were to be active in the learning process, not just passive recipients of ideas contained in lectures. From the beginning of Jesuit education, students engaged in exercises in composition, in disputations or debates, in contests, in giving speeches and acting in plays. The sixth characteristic has been the emphasis on humanities and rhetoric, the arts, mathematics, philosophy, and, of course, theology. Ignatius and his companions shared the Renaissance conviction about the value of the Greek and Roman classics as instruments of humanization and models of what Jesuits have always called *eloquentia perfecta*, the ability to speak and write clearly and persuasively. This emphasis on *eloquentia perfecta* constitutes the seventh characteristic. The strong focus on verbal and written eloquence partly reflects Renaissance humanism, but it also reflects Jesuits’ devotion to the Gospel mandate to preach the good news. And finally, the eighth characteristic was that Jesuit education was to be international, not confined within particular nations or cultures.

These are the central qualities of a true Jesuit education. They represent the way in which the devout spirituality of Ignatius and his first followers became incorporated in an education vision. So why were the Jesuit schools so successful? First, they represented something genuinely new. The kind of schools the Jesuits developed for lay people simply did not exist at the time. There were schools at court, like the school run by Vittorino Da Feltre at the Mantua court of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga to educate his children in the ideals of the Renaissance. But the schools developed by Ignatius and his companions were different. Jesuit schools were abundant and affordable—tuition was completely free prior to the Suppression of the Jesuits in 1773—and thus accessible well beyond the court life of the nobility.

Second, from their founding, the Jesuits were open to change as the times changed, and ready to take up whatever new subject matter and methods came on the scene. When Europe underwent the scientific revolution, for instance, the Jesuit schools eagerly incorporated a scientific curriculum and, in fact, produced some of the leading scientists of the 17th and 18th centuries. A third reason for success was that Jesuits embraced the spirit of the new humanism that redefined what it meant to be a “man.” In the Middle Ages, the mark of manhood was chivalry, skill, and valor in battle. The Renaissance redefined manhood as eloquence, the art of persuasion, the ability to build up the city. The ideal “man” became the engaged citizen. Today we call this civic leadership. It is interesting to note that

Perhaps the most important reason for the success of the Jesuit schools was the Ignatian conviction of the fundamental goodness of human beings and of the world. In his own personal development, Ignatius himself had moved from an attachment to the ideals of chivalry to embrace the different kind of “manliness” of Jesus Christ and the saints, which was more about interior freedom and devotion to the good of the neighbor, especially the poor.

A fourth reason for the success of the Jesuit schools, perhaps the most important of all, was the Ignatian conviction of the fundamental goodness of human beings and of the world. The seeds of this conviction lie, as we have already seen, in the “Contemplation on Love” of *The Spiritual Exercises*. Along with this conviction went the belief that people are educable. The early Jesuits shared this belief with the leaders of the Renaissance revolution in education, but not necessarily with all the religious movements of their time. It wasn’t that Ignatius underestimated the power of sin, but for him redemption was more powerful. At the root of the Ignatian vision lies the Pauline conviction that “where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more.” Ignatius believed the Holy Spirit continually uses human instruments to carry out the transformation of individuals and of society.

A fifth reason for the success of the Jesuit schools was, I think, the commitment of the Jesuits themselves to founding and staffing these schools. It is extraordinary that when Ignatius
was asked to open the first school in Messina, he immediately chose to send ten talented Jesuits to staff it. And as more and more requests came in, Ignatius managed to find more Jesuits to staff them. This guaranteed a remarkable unity in the

From its first foundation the Jesuit order has been revising the articulations of its central vision in light of ongoing experience.

widely scattered Jesuit institutions. Jesuits were all inspired by the same spiritual vision, and Ignatius regularly sent around “visitors” to make sure that Jesuit educators everywhere were regularly communicating about their experience and moving in tandem.

For several decades they kept refining their educational goals until they were all brought together in the definitive and very detailed “Ratio Studiorum,” or “Plan of Studies” of 1599, which became the foundational guide for the development of Jesuit education up to modern times. It is important to note, however, that after centuries of use this Plan of Studies became more and more outdated. Modern Jesuits have undertaken a radical revision of this plan while trying to remain true to its essential spirit.

The Post-Vatican II Context and Challenges Ahead

The post-Vatican II context and the “age of Pope Francis” can be understood as overlapping notions. The age of Francis is a kind of “second spring” of Vatican II. Francis’ two predecessors, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, were also post-Vatican II popes. They affirmed the Council and lived out of it as they interpreted it. But for many progressive Catholics their interpretation seemed stifling, and resulted in a kind of winter of discontent. The dynamism of Vatican II seemed to have stalled, the door that had been opened wide at least partially closed. This interpretation, while widely held in some circles, is not entirely accurate or fair. But it is clear that the dynamism and the openness of Vatican II now seem to be resurgent in Pope Francis. So I want to talk about Vatican II, the Jesuit response to it, and the challenges of the new spring Francis has brought about.

From its first foundation the Jesuit order has been revising the articulations of its central vision in light of ongoing experience. This constant reformulation takes place at the highest level in what are called “general congregations,” of which 36 have taken place in the nearly 500 years of the Society’s existence. Congregations, consisting of Jesuit representatives from around the world, elect the Superior General of the Jesuits and also reformulate ideas and policies in light of changes in history and culture. A dramatic reformulation took place in the 32nd General Congregation, held from December of 1974 to March 1975, that has deeply influenced the Society in all of its commitments.

Asked by the Second Vatican Council, along with all religious orders, to rediscover its founding vision or “charism,” the Jesuit General Congregation 32 came up with a startlingly simple but profoundly controversial and far-reaching formulation: “The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another” (GC 32, Doc 4, 48). This bold statement forced Jesuits to look at everything they were doing, including education. Divisions occurred. Some Jesuits were deeply inspired by this new formulation; others thought the Order had lost its way. Experiments took place, along with many arguments and much reflection. Twenty years later, in General Congregation 34, the Jesuits revisited this statement and reformulated it to express more clearly what they thought it meant: “... the contemporary Jesuit mission is the service of faith and the promotion in society of that justice of the Gospel which is the embodiment of God’s love and saving mercy.” The feeling had developed over the twenty years between these two congregations that the first formulation was not sufficiently clear in what it meant by “justice.” The new formulation addressed some of the uneasiness that the first formula had generated,
and rooted the Jesuit mission more clearly in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

The 34th General Congregation also connected the commitment to the justice of the Gospel with interreligious and intercultural dialogue, which grew so significantly in the last quarter of the 20th century. More and more the openness to interreligious and intercultural dialogue has come to provide a very different context for the Jesuit sense of mission. And one of the most effective forums for this dialogue, Jesuits recognized, is the university. This new challenge has thus profoundly affected what Jesuits now do in higher education. “Diversity” has become a key goal—cultural, racial, religious.

I see three principal challenges facing Jesuit higher education in this second spring of the Vatican Council, this age of Pope Francis. The first challenge is to ensure that the educational vision continues to be inspired by the authentic spirituality of Ignatius as it has developed over the centuries. Jesuit education is Catholic, ecumenical, interreligious and intercultural, humanistic, and committed to proclaiming the justice of the Gospel. The challenge is that this vision can easily become secularized. People may like the emphasis on social justice but be reluctant to accept its roots in the Gospel. The Gospel offers a community of love. In a society where individualism is rampant, many seem allergic to community, to the common good, and to care for our common home.

A second challenge is maintaining what the previous superior general of the Jesuits, Adolfo Nicolas, calls depth of thought and imagination in the face of “the globalization of superficiality” (Mexico City Address of 2010). The incredible availability of information in the internet age can tend to create a kind of fragmentation, an inability to read and think and imagine deeply. The fast-food phenomenon has become a symbol of our age. We grab something on the run. We nibble on sound bites of news. Social media tend to substitute the quick exchange of new information for seriously engaged conversation. The internet has many extraordinary benefits, but we need to balance its seductive attraction with an emphasis on the importance of depth—on the ancient Jesuit goal of formation and transformation rather than just information.

A third challenge is ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. Various religions have regarded one another as competitors for so long that we have been tempted to forget that we have a common adversary, antireligious secularism. Now this is truly a complicated subject. Some of you may have read the magisterial work of the Canadian Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor, A Secular Age. The history of secularism is long and nuanced. In many ways secularism has been a benefit to religion. My point here is not to criticize secularism per se but to stress the great contributions the world’s religions have made and can continue to make to social life. World religions have reached a point in history where we have the possibility to listen deeply to one another, to converse openly, to compare and contrast convictions, and finally to bring to bear the wisdom of all these traditions on our common problems. Religious conflict has been and still is the cause of much disruption of human life. A great challenge now is to enlist the resources of religion in service of the common good of humanity.

Pope Francis’ constant preaching of the Gospel of mercy is precisely an invitation to this kind of dialogue. It is at the root of everything he says and does. And mercy is the authentic heart of all religions. What a challenge to all education to include this notion in its vision!

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THE FIRE INSIDE US

Tonight a mist hangs on the wilted flowers in the iron ground and cold birds twitch on wires running over the frozen fields. There is no way to tell you that winter will last a few months, and then thaw, or that these hopping birds, like clots of coal against the snow, will nest tonight in the barn, warm with straw and the sweet breath of cows.

Windows close with my breath as I go from room to room, watching the lane, listening to the silver wires thrumming along the curving banks of snow where foxes snuffle and burrow in their winter sleep. These are the things we loved together, naming the animals, watching the pond freeze over, the last geese rising into their winter flyways—are the things I thought would hold you, that and our love and the fire inside us.

I will take my bath and stand naked against the cold window until you call me to bed where we will move against each other, feeling the length of our bodies as we talk of the day and the farm before we grow quiet, listening to the leaves brushing the window and the sudden bark of the fox in Turley's Woods,—until we sleep, that long winter sleep, breathing the fire inside us.

J.T. Ledbetter
God in the Grammar

A Review of Tom Wolfe's The Kingdom of Speech

David Weber

Fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in Grammar.1

—Frederick Nietzsche

Why did Nietzsche worry about grammar's connection to God? He thought the religious herd would wrongly believe that God makes sense of existence as grammar makes sense of a sentence. How then does grammar make sense of a sentence? Consider the real-life example from Monty Python's movie, The Life of Brian. Brian (Graham Chapman) is a contemporary of Jesus who has been mistaken for the Jewish Messiah. Needing to establish his revolutionary street cred, Brian, under the cloak of darkness, paints walls with anti-Roman graffiti. Just then, a centurion (John Cleese) happens upon Brian. Rather than arresting him, the centurion angrily studies Brian's grammar. “What's this, then?” asks the centurion. “Romanes eunt domus? 'People called Romanes they go the house'?!” The sentence makes no sense because Brian has forgotten the rules of noun declension and verb conjugation. The centurion offers a stern grammar tutorial and corrects Brian's graffiti to read “Romani ite domum,” (Romans, go home). Having succeeded in structuring a sentence that makes sense, the centurion tells Brian to “write it out 100 times.”

God's connection to grammar will take a bit more than a paragraph to explain. I begin by turning to Tom Wolfe's The Kingdom of Speech,2 in which Wolfe enjoys telling stories about characters who do not accept the “speech divide.” The two main characters, Charles Darwin and Noam Chomsky, have advanced theories that, to date, have failed to explain speech in a way that overcomes the distinction between members of the animal kingdom and members of the kingdom of speech. In fact, Wolfe's takedown of Darwin is so ruthless that a National Public Radio Weekend Edition interviewer worried that Wolfe had given credence to (insert gasp) Biblical creationism. Wolfe calmed the interviewer's jitters by affirming that speech is "an invention by human beings," and that there is not "a shred of whatever" to support the view that speech originates with "an extraterrestrial power." Confirming this view in his book, Wolfe also enjoys telling the story of Bible translator Daniel Everett—who turns out to be Noam Chomsky's unlikely nemesis in that Everett's faith diminished as his linguistic sophistication increased. The God/grammar connection is not obvious to Wolfe or Everett.

Like almost every character in this story, Wolfe is an atheist, except that he dislikes atheism because he dislikes every ism. Isms like Darwinism attract characters like Thomas Huxley—Darwin's Bulldog—who "became such an ardent Darwinist not because he believed in Darwin's theory of natural selection—he never did—but because Darwin was obviously an atheist, just as he was." Nietzsche, mixing Darwinism and atheism, paid "Darwin and his theory the highest praise," when he declared that if "'there is no cardinal distinction between man and animal; then 'God is dead.'” The effect of God's death, Nietzsche observed, would so "demoralize humanity throughout the West," that it would pave the way for the rise of "barbaric nationalistic brotherhoods," which we now know as Nazism, Communism, and Fascism. These isms would sponsor "wars such as never have been fought before" which would bring about the "total eclipse of all (traditional) values." Nietzsche thought this was the good news.

Wolfe thinks that speech is "one weird trick" that categorically divides the kingdom of speech from the animal kingdom. "There's no telling," he says, how we first learned to code and decode
“t-r-e-e,” because there are “no traces of any evolution of language through the sounds that apes make, or dolphins, for that matter.” Speech seems to have “just popped up into the mouths of human beings from out of nowhere.” This view was echoed by a Chomsky-led group of linguists who admitted that efforts to explain “the most fundamental questions about the origins and evolution of our linguistic capacity” have been “a colossal waste of time.” Speech has yet to be explained in evolutionary terms, and Darwin’s dogma that “human beings are nothing but animals” still lacks scientific support.

To be sure, human beings do seem to be nothing but animals. Genetic studies demonstrate that human and chimpanzee DNA are 99 percent indistinguishable, with the human/animal connection confirmed by neuroscience and evolutionary psychology. And, after explaining “man’s opposable thumb, upright stature, and huge cranium,” in evolutionary terms, Darwin could reasonably expect that an evolutionary explanation of speech would follow. Once that happened, Wolfe writes, Darwinism would displace Catholicism as the “Theory of Everything,” which explains “everything in the world to be part of a single and suddenly clear pattern.”

Giving an evolutionary explanation for the origin of speech troubled Darwin throughout his career. Wolfe quotes Max Müller, a German linguist and Oxford professor, who argued in 1861 that “Language is our Rubicon, and no brute will dare to cross it” because speech forms “a hard and fast line between man and brute.” Furthermore, Müller presumed that the science of language would “enable us to withstand the extreme theories of evolutionists” and defeat evolutionary science. Alfred Wallace—whose field studies had been suspiciously scooped by Darwin—wrote in his book *Darwinism* that natural selection could not account for the complex brain functions necessary for human speech. As such, speech pointed to “a superior…. controlling intelligence.” Darwin’s response: “I hope you have not murdered too completely your own and my child.”

The MIT linguist Noam Chomsky has advanced theories explaining the origin of speech. Chomsky was named in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica’s* list of “the 100 Most Influential Philosophers of All Time.” Wolfe was not. Perhaps this, or their political differences, explains the entertaining animus that drives Wolfe’s takedown of Chomsky. Wolfe thinks Chomsky is a genius and an intellectual. Genius is a term of regard; intellectual is not. Chomsky’s genius is certifiable. As a graduate student in his twenties, he took linguistics “and hardened it from a spongy so-called social science into a real science, a hard science.” Chomsky had “scientifically” discovered the “deep structure” in grammar, which is to say that he had “physical, empirical, organic, biological” scientific evidence supporting his thesis that humans have a “language acquisition device.” If you recall, this, along with other explanations of human speech, proved part of “a colossal waste of time.”

This admission of a failed theory was a tacit acknowledgment of intellectual malfeasance. Chomsky’s fame exploded on the public stage with a virtuoso destruction of behaviorist B. F. Skinner’s theory of verbal behavior. Wolfe explains how Chomsky charged Skinner with ignorance of the “remarkably complex phenomenon” of speech, and went on to expose the clever ways Skinner disguised ignorance with “the technical vocabulary of laboratory experiments—‘controls,’ ‘probabilities,’ ‘stimulus,’ ‘response,’ ‘reinforcement’….to create[e] the illusion of a rigorous scientific theory.” Sprinkle in terms like “probabilities,” and nonsense takes on “the tang of statistical accuracy.” And, if ever cornered by persistent questions, increase “loudness, pitch, and frequency.”

Wolfe thinks Chomsky is guilty of the same rhetorical disingenuousness as demonstrated in Chomsky’s famous 1967 essay, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals.” Arguing against America’s involvement in Vietnam, Chomsky declared that “It is the responsibility of intellectuals….to speak the truth and to expose lies.” What seems platitudinous is in fact the pronouncement by “an angry god raining fire and brimstone down not merely upon worldlings committing beastly crimes but also upon the anointed angels who had grown soft, corrupt, and silent to the point of complicity with the very forces of Evil it is their sacred duty to protect mankind from.” In other words, according to Chomsky, telling the truth is not what all
decent human beings ought to do. It is the special province of intellectuals who alone have the specialized scientific skills to discover and apply "the truth." Now, one reviewer observed, "every plodding English department adjunct and uninspired life sciences prof imagine themselves not as instructors but as "intellectuals..."

Wolfe's most disliked ism is clericalism, which is now manifested in the scientist/intellectual "clerisy," or intelligentsia. As a high priest of this clerisy, Chomsky faced critics whom he saw not as interlocutors but as heretics. This impressive list of heretics includes "the frauds": B. F. Skinner, Elie Wiesel, and Jacques Derrida; "the liars": Alan Dershowitz, Christopher Hitchens; and "the charlatan," the French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan. You can see why Wolfe so enjoyed reporting that Chomsky's undoing came at the hand of Daniel Everett, a graduate of the (insert sneer) fundamentalist Moody Bible Institute's Bible translator program. Everett made two important discoveries in his study of the Amazonian Pirahã speech: First, "Good night" means "Don't sleep, there are snakes," and second, the language has no recursion, or a way to nest one idea within another. The second discovery was "the final nail in the coffin for Noam Chomsky's hugely influential theory of universal grammar."

No doubt you recall what you were doing the moment you heard that the theory of universal grammar died. On that day sentences lost their sense of meaning because to be verbs chose not to be. Their ended the confusion by taking possession of they're and there, and dangling participles finally let go. All facetiousness aside, on the day Chomsky's theory died, nothing in fact happened, because our capacity to code and decode t-r-e-e is a weird trick that marks or makes us human.

Consider again Nietzsche's suspicion that the kingdom of God covertsly resides within the kingdom of speech. If God is in grammar, then the weird trick that makes us human would be the weirder trick that makes us holy. This seems to be the view of Old Testament scholar Ellen F. Davis in her 300-plus-page book of sermons and essays called Preaching the Luminous Word, which spells out the "conviction that...the word of the living God...(is) given to us in human words so that we may 'live by them'" (Lev.18:5). I will consider this conviction in terms of understanding and enjoying the Bible's luminosity.5

Perhaps a variation on a common analogy will clarify the distinction between understanding and enjoyment. Imagine that you are a child—or a moth—that has spotted a beam of light coming from a high-powered flashlight. Understanding means being drawn to look at the light, which can be enlightening and blinding. Enjoyment means turning the light outward in order to see everything else by that light. Very generally, scholarship looks at the light, and preaching shows what everything else looks like by that light. This formula of scholarship and preaching is encrusted in every seminary curriculum and the cause of so many sermons that are endured rather than enjoyed. If the kingdom of God's presence makes the kingdom of speech less weird, then, as I read Davis, something has gone wrong with our understanding and enjoyment of the Bible's luminosity.

What has gone wrong is that we mis-understand the Bible because we misread the Bible because we do not read the Old Testament. The point is made in a short passage by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Imprisoned and awaiting execution, Bonhoeffer needed to decode 1-o-s-s in a way that he could also love "'life and the earth.'" So he defined loss as "the resurrection of the dead and a new world." Not r-e-s-u-r-r-e-c-t-i-o-n as a vapid wish, as it is so often expressed in boilerplate Easter sermons. For Bonhoeffer, the resurrection was the culmination of a history that ran from the Old Testament through the New Testament and to the end of history. The resurrection is an event, on the far end of a coherent history, that includes God's law as "'binding'" and that law-breakers are God's enemies who are slated for "'wrath and vengeance.'" Bonhoeffer wrote that "'Only when..."
the wrath and vengeance of God against God's enemies are allowed to stand can something of forgiveness and the love of enemies touch our hearts."

Bonhoeffer's resurrection radically contrasts with the current, breezy Marcionism that marginalizes the Old Testament. Two examples: first, thinking the vengeful Old Testament God was defeated by the peaceful New Testament God; and second, thinking that the New Testament Gospel absolutely rejects the Old Testament law.

If decoding t-r-e-e is a weird trick, decoding Isaiah's v-o-c-a-t-i-o-n will prove to be a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside a steroid-popping enigma.

Bonhoeffer's resurrection gave him consolation because it licensed him to decode l-o-s-s without denying his wrath and vengeance at the Nazi sponsored evil. Instead, it showed him a path where his wrath and vengeance participated in God's wrath and vengeance, which is a stage on the way to God's forgiveness and love for the enemy. Only by walking the whole arduous path of experiencing and then transcending real wrath and vengeance is there any hope of enjoying the real forgiveness of real enemies. This means, says Bonhoeffer, that we should not read the Bible in a way that would "perceive things too quickly and too directly." Davis demonstrates how to read the Old Testament in this way by considering the life of Moses and of the book of Isaiah.

In the biblical biography, Moses begins as an abandoned baby floating down a stream in a wicker basket and ends on the Mount of Transfiguration giving consolation to Jesus before his crucifixion. This path from stream to mountain makes no sense until we see Moses as a liberator, a law-giver, and a defiant, failed leader who was barred from the Promised Land. Why was he banished? The Bible says in Deuteronomy that God blamed Israel and in Numbers, God blamed Moses. Either way, Moses was banished and someone was to blame. Davis considers the Numbers account. Moses was at fault because he lost sight of a truth he previously understood with clarity and heroic courage. Though raised in privilege, he was not blind to the suffering of the Hebrew slaves. Though familiar with power, Moses saw through Pharaoh's illegitimate tyranny and sided with God's liberating authority. However, over time, Moses came to think too highly of his success and so became "embittered" by his failures. In bitterness, he struck a rock with his staff, and God responded, "Because you did not show faith in me, you shall not bring this congregation in the land that I have promised them." Moses became "an obstruction and danger to the people." He had lost his faith and could not lead a movement that moves "from faith to faith." If he did not believe, how could he lead?

Davis notes that Franz Kafka thought that Moses "suffers this most bitter disappointment simply because he is human, and to be human is to inhabit a world that does not match our dreams and desires." Had Moses defined being human as Kafka did, his despair would have seemed tragically beautiful. But Moses inhabited the strange biblical world where being human means becoming holy. It is a world where the resurrection means that "our dreams and desires" are more real than our failures and disappointments. In Kafka's world, Moses' bitterness is reasonable, but in a resurrection-defined reality, his bitterness required a forgiveness that put him in the center of the Promised Land at the center of the fulfillment of God's promise in Jesus' crucifixion. This restoration began soon after Moses was banished. He continued to lead God's people to the Promised Land until his death, which "does not occur for some fifty more chapters."

The other example of Davis' scholarly skill in slow reading Scripture is her decoding Isaiah's sense of vocation, which begins with Isaiah's reply to God's call, "Here am I..." If decoding t-r-e-e is a weird trick, decoding Isaiah's v-o-c-a-t-i-o-n will prove to be a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside a steroid-popping enigma. One problem is that Isaiah is not one but three books, authored by a prophetic tradition that "took shape at multiple
hands over a period of more than two centuries.” Another problem is that readers of Isaiah tend to gravitate to the “upbeat” oracles of salvation in Second and Third Isaiah with the happy images of lions lying down with lambs (happy for the lions, at least), and the cute picture of a child leading followers beside a nest of poisonous snakes. Davis argues that decoding vocation only by the light of the oracles of salvation produces an incomplete and incoherent picture of vocation. A truer picture of vocation means reading the whole book of Isaiah, inclusive of the judgment oracles. For Davis, this means addressing eight interrelated and overlapping themes. I consider each in turn.

Theme 1: The Holy One of Israel. As the seraphim proclaimed that God is holy, holy, holy, Isaiah came to understand that human happiness desires God’s holiness. Isaiah understood, but Israel did not because they decoded happiness in terms of “wealth and military might.” After having his unclean lips cauterized by a burning coal, Isaiah accepted the weird vocation of speaking to an audience who was “incapable of hearing.”

Theme 2: The Justice and Righteousness of God. Isaiah’s vocation was to pump words like justice and righteousness into the air in hope that “all humankind will learn justice and righteousness,” and that “knee and tongue submit to the one whose nature is righteousness.” How do words compete with money, pleasure, and power? The words justice and righteousness are names of desires that lie deep in our human nature. These deep realities can lie undisturbed while others suffer injustice and unrighteousness. But the moment we are victims of injustice and unrighteousness, we spontaneously demand the swift restoration of justice and righteousness. This is when the prophet was most likely to find an attentive audience, ready to understand and enjoy God’s justice and righteousness.

Theme 3: The Judgment of God. Just to keep things straight, judgment and justice come from the same word, mishpat. Loving justice seems possible; loving judgment does not. After all, “judge not” is at the top of our favorite Jesus passages. And yet, judgment, as Davis preaches in a sermon called “The Good News of Judgment,” is a sign that God is present, clearing away the rubbish of empty “holy days” in order to establish the holiness that is the desire of human happiness. We need crisis before we welcome judgment. Judgment is not the crisis. It is a sign of God’s presence initiating crisis resolution by labeling the causes of the crises—idolatry, lies, love of pleasure and power, and fake peace. Judgment is not damnation; it is demolition that clears a space for a better place.

Theme 4: Zion. Holy, holy, holiness seeks location, location, location. Zion is the Lord’s mountain location, “where nations stream to learn from YHWH’s Torah of justice and righteousness.” This mountain contrasts with the realpolitik of the city of Jerusalem, which cleverly forges flimsy alliances to give easy access to desired idolatry. When put to the test, Jerusalem’s false fullness flames out. Then judgment will be welcomed as a sign of God’s presence in the demolition of purging and edification in teaching, which gives “comfort to mourners” and “restores its righteousness...to the end of the earth.”

Theme 5: Vocation Fulfilled within History. Words can weirdly change how we decode t-i-m-e. Isaiah’s vocation time transfigures chronological time. Chronological time requires the quick fixes of money and power because time is short. Vocation time moves slowly and indirectly because it “gains dimensionally”; not by leaps and bounds but in fits and starts. The “cumulative witness of the four (Servant) songs” voices vocation time, where the “vindication by God” moves to fulfillment along a broken path of “exhausting labor, humiliation, death.” Vocation time rejects the “illusion that everything essential...is easily discovered,” but rather works with words to “gradually” build within the single individual’s soul a “competence, confidence, and even love” for the real things that have names like justice, judgment, righteousness, and Zion. This cumulative—rather than chronological—momentum is calendrically marked by the Church Year, ritually celebrated in the liturgy, and repeatedly energized by boring preaching—that is, the kind of preaching that, week in and week out, bores into the depths of the Word’s luminosity.

Theme 6: A Remnant Will Return. How does Isaiah decode r-e-m-n-a-n-t? Not as refuse but as the basic building block of a cumulative momen-
tum of making us holy and whole. The remnant recognize that "We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately." Isolated, solitary individual remnants go nowhere, while remnants joined by the desire for (w)holiness return, "energetically, to pursue their vocation to be 'the ones left in Zion and in Jerusalem [who] are called holy.'"

Theme 7: Trust and Shalom. Over time, if words like justice and righteousness prove to be truthful names of our deep desires, remnant persons and God will forge bonds of trust, which will somehow bring about peace. Wealth and power seem to be more tangible solutions to our anxiety, as characterized by King Ahaz’s useful “military defenses and alliances” and convenient coexistence with “foreign idols,” and “syncretistic cults.” Usefulness and convenience are calculations, which means they do not depend on trust and so cannot forge bonds of trust and will not bring about peace. Speaking to anxiety-ridden students, Davis preached that deliverance from anxiety means learning to “trust that another intention and action underlies yours and will bring your efforts to a fruitful conclusion” (297). Only trust “enables Israel to receive the divine blessing of shalom,” which flows like a river. Directed by borders and accumulating momentum, it moves toward fulfillment.

Theme 8: The Ultimate Fulfillment of Vocation. A vocation orients one’s existence "wholly and publicly to the new reality YHWH is bringing into being.” This means an unrealized reality that often seems unreal orients our existence. The unreal is not undesirable. To be human is to desire the peace that comes when death is swallowed up and we are "free of weeping and calamity." Doubt does not destroy desire; it renders desire unbelievable. As such, our peace depends on being able to trust that our desires draw us toward the holiness that is our ultimate human fulfillment. This essential trust somehow depends on words and the Word performing some weird tricks that happen in preaching. In practical terms, the fulfillment of our deepest human desires for holiness depends on persons becoming preachers, because they are drawn—like a child or moth—to look at the Luminous Word and find abiding enjoyment in reporting to the rest of us how everything else looks like by that light.

Understanding the speech that makes us human draws us to enjoy the humanities. Understanding the speech that makes us holy draws us to enjoy preaching. Neither the humanities nor preaching are much enjoyed by many these days. Reading Wolfe and Davis reveals just how much enjoyment the many are missing."

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Endnotes


6 Marcionism "rejected the writings of the Old Testament and taught that Christ was not the Son of the God of the Jews, but the Son of the good God, who was different from the God of the Ancient Covenant.” http://www.newadvent.org/cathan/09645c.htm.

7 Isaiah states, “Woe is me, for I am undone! / Because I am a man of unclean lips, / And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips…” Isaiah 6:5.

8 Benjamin Franklin.
Crisis Management

A Review of Rumba Under Fire

A crisis of sorts has been brewing in the humanities for decades: low enrollment. Indeed, an analysis from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences last year documented that the number of bachelor degrees in humanities disciplines fell to the lowest number since 2003. Part of the decline appears to be because students don’t see a practical application for the knowledge they gain in a humanities class. What does the study of literature, art, languages, or music matter in the face of current events? A new collection of essays, poetry, and interviews, Rumba Under Fire: The Arts of Survival from West Point to Delhi, provides answers to that question.

“The liberal arts—and more broadly, the arts—are at the mercy of political turmoil, economic collapse, and religious persecution, but they also respond to these calamities. If they survive, scholars and artists can continue their work within crisis, perhaps even because of crisis,” writes Irina Dumitrescu, editor and contributor, in the introduction. Dumitrescu goes on to acknowledge great works that have been created during or after imprisonment, including writing by Miguel de Cervantes, Martin Luther King Jr., Antonio Gramsci, and others. Many writers, including Dante, Voltaire, Hemingway, and Orwell, have written in the context of displacement and war. It might be tempting to think that times of crisis provide fertile soil for art, but Dumitrescu cautions against this. “To catalogue such successes in the face of hardship or tragedy is to risk romanticizing catastrophe. The immediacy of the work before us threatens to blot out the suffering experienced by its author, real to them if not to us. This suffering they might well have preferred to avoid, even if it did eventually result in transcendent work.”

One way of combatting such romanticism is to get up-close and personal with the particularities of crisis. This process begins with Denis Ferhatović’s essay, “What Book Would You Never Burn (For Fuel)?” The title alone caused me to squirm as I sat in my comfortable office, surrounded by bookshelves.

Ferhatović begins by writing about a recent trip to Sarajevo, one in which he notices used book stalls and wonders about the age of the books being sold. “Of course, many of these used books now for sale in the open air of the Bosnian capital came from elsewhere, but some of them, I believe, are real survivors. They must have withstood the long siege and come through to the other side. They hold stories inside their pages in more than one sense, some so painful that you wish you could forget...
them." I have never been to Sarajevo, but I have spent countless hours searching for treasures in the form of used books. Suddenly, I can smell the slightly musty pages, right along with Ferhatović.

The books become even more real as I step closer and read their titles. "A curious individual could extrapolate a person's education, taste, and attachments by reading a list of books in the order in which he or she sacrificed them, from communists at the beginnings to Shakespeare at the end." I begin to compile a list of my own in my head. I have never been in a position to consider the order I would need to sacrifice much of anything, let alone my books. I have certainly never had to balance necessary warmth with reading material.

It is one thing to discuss this topic with friends, and another to hear about it from those who experienced it. Ferhatović quotes Danilo Kiš, a professor and author of the book Garden, Ashes. Kiš writes: "My life depends on words. Spoken and written. On books. Perhaps this is how I survived the Sarajevo winter of 1992/93, that war-ravaged year. I used books as fuel, I burned the written word. Their flame warmed me, but it scorched me, too...I an accomplice of all the book-burning barbarians." My life also depends on words. They are my livelihood as well as my joy. But I am a California transplant in Washington State. Winter hasn't been gone long enough for me to have forgotten what her cold fingers feel like. I would have burned my books, too, and I would have been miserable about it as well.

The essay continues with some of Ferhatović's personal stories: his mother stores his books while he teaches in Turkey, going down to visit them in the basement when she misses him. His significant other sends him books through international mail, and some fail to reach him or are mangled. He concludes the essay this way: "The savage irony of books as fuel in Sarajevo became apparent to me as I was contemplating my own comparatively less traumatizing situation: during war the enemy tries to destroy everything you hold dear, and then there is another horrible twist, in which they force you to participate in erasing traces of yourself, in order to survive."

While it is painful just to think about burning books, or to have them taken from us, we can survive without them. An interview with Cara De Silva, editor of In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezín, tells the story of a cookbook of sorts. "During the Holocaust many prisoners talked about food a lot," says De Silva, "not only about starving, which one might expect, but also about particular dishes, about recipes, about where in their hometown they considered the best place to get an ingredient. They did what was sometimes called 'Cooking with the Mouth.'"

Some prisoners went beyond talking, writing down recipes on scraps of paper they could scrounge up, even though paper and pencils were scarce. The resulting "cookbook," a collaboration of five bunkmates in Terezín, became In Memory's Kitchen.

The reason De Silva doesn't consider this a true cookbook is simply this: because the women were starving, their brains failing to get the nutrients they needed, most of the recipes simply don't work. The recipes themselves aren't really the point, of course. The recounting of the recipes was a way to hold out hope for the future, and a way to remember the past, before the Nazis.

Another way to block out an unpleasant present is to dance. Dumitrescu shares the story of a pair of teenage boys, political prisoners in Romania. One teaches the other to tango. "Terpsichore teaches absorption, an attention to physical technique that erases the world outside studio, ballroom, or cell," she writes. "When dancing, we enter the realm of the physical, an area beyond ideology or even bare thought." Dumitrescu admits that Gheorghe, the boy...
who wants to learn to dance the tango to get romantic with girls in his village, is right to think this muse is sexy, but there is more to it than simple adolescent lust. “He dreams of existence beyond space and prisons and politics. He dreams of an eternal and constant beat, felt, as if accidentally, though the back of his hand.”

These Romanian boys danced the tango in prison, obviously without music. It is one thing to get caught up in a melody or beat, yet another to become enraptured with the dance itself. Their music was internal, something that could not be taken away from them, no matter how many times they were searched.

Music, too, can provide some relief in hard times. Judith Verweijen’s essay, “Rumba Under Fire: Music as Morale and Morality in the Frontlines of the Congo,” follows several Congolese soldiers as they make their way through separation from their families, meager food, and the emotional ravages of war. Music is one way that they escape from reality for a short while, even as people die around them.

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The stories in this book only begin to scratch the surface of this topic. Still, it is enough to make it clear that art and letters matter, even in the most dire of circumstances. This book is not the end of the conversation, I hope, but an invitation to continue thinking deeply about these topics.

Like many collections of this sort, I did not find every entry equally compelling. I recommend it for the contributions by Ferhatovic, De Silva, and Verweijen. There are others, as well, including Susannah Hollister’s essay about using playing cards to count weeks of survival while her partner was deployed, Dumirescu’s piece on prisoners finding freedom in poetry, instructing and learning from one another, and prayer, more than made up for any unevenness in the collection.

Our current age suffers thick and constant conflict all over the world. It strikes me as wise to collect methods of coping. Whether we write, read, compose, play, dance, or cook, we are storing up inner resources that will help sustain us in dark times. Our engagement with humanities and the arts needs not expire or diminish. In fact, with use, our connection will only grow stronger and more intricate, impossible to separate from who we are.

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As a Christian, I cannot read this book without thinking about another piece of this puzzle: faith. Dance, words, music, even food, are gifts intimately connected with faith, gifts that allow us to move closer to the Divine. I have only to open my Bible to see examples that would fit well into this book. Paul and Silas sing songs of praise in prison (to say nothing of Paul’s prison epistles). The children of Israel are constantly reminded that they must keep the mighty works of God before them so that they don’t forget when things get hard. The parables of Jesus exemplify the transformative power of story.

While no one wishes for hard times, they do come. This book reminds its readers that frequently these times are out of one’s individual control. No amount of care in how we live can protect us from war or an oppressive regime. But even if our books burn and our music is away, even if our prayers must come from memory, all is not yet lost. There is still hope, even under fire.

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Leading by Example
A Review of Realizing the Distinctive University
Mel Piehl

Mark W. Roche, a noted scholar and Catholic educator, has written the third in a series of books on the modern university and liberal learning, especially in a Catholic context. The first two—*The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University* (2003) and *Why Choose the Liberal Arts?* (2010)—addressed broad issues of, respectively, the Catholic intellectual tradition’s relevance in a largely secular academic age, and the importance of the liberal arts amidst the vast pressures for practical and professional education.

While it to some extent assumes the arguments of those two earlier books, *Realizing the Distinctive University* is a different breed of cat. Drawing heavily on Roche’s decade of experience as the Dean of Notre Dame’s College of Arts and Letters, the book is intended to be a visionary yet highly practical manual of advice for senior academic leaders—deans, provosts, presidents—for how they might seek to lead and improve their own universities. It is, Roche says, “about intellectual principles of administration and strategies for moving from vision to implementation.” (p. 2)

Yet even as it aims at this goal, *Realizing the Distinctive University* does a number of other things. It offer something of a personal memoir of Roche’s tenure as faculty member and dean at both Notre Dame and, earlier, Ohio State, with an emphasis on the vast change in outlook required when a faculty member “moves over” to administration. It comments on the past and present state of American—and German—higher education. It offers, *inter alia*, Roche’s perspective on how an intellectually alert Catholicism relates to higher learning. The book argues that a distinctive vision or ideal is critical to success, especially amidst the “disturbing changes and new challenges” currently facing higher education. And finally, *Realizing the Distinctive University* points to ways that certain ingrained American academic practices, such as institutional diversity, close faculty-student interaction, alumni relations, and private donations, might be adapted by international universities.

Although Roche says he is not providing an “overview of American higher education,” he begins with a compressed history of the modern university, presenting it as a change from the great nineteenth-century “German model” based on original research or Wissenschaft, academic freedom (Lehrfreiheit and Lernfreiheit), and Bildung (individual self-cultivation) to the “American model” based on undergraduate liberal arts, institutional diversity, mass education, and “applied scholarship” providing practical benefits to society.
in such areas as agriculture, manufacturing, and medicine. He then argues that many American universities face an "identity crisis" in which their multiple purposes pull them in different and often contradictory directions—leading them to randomly chase prestige, funding, and popularity in whatever ways they can, with predictably confusing and incoherent results.

Roche's central response to this widespread confusion about identity and purpose is to tell academic leaders to identify and elevate a unique vision for their particular institution. Once that central vision is understood, articulated, and made visible to all the university's constituencies, the rest of the academic leader's tasks naturally follows. These are, first, "embodying" the vision, and then funding it—that is, figuring out what central programs reflect the vision and then providing the resources to make them excellent. That leads to the need for precise "structures, strategies, and struggles" to implement these visionary goals amidst the nitty-gritty academic world of faculty careerism, bureaucracy, and numerous other distractions.

Of course Roche is writing all this primarily about the University of Notre Dame—where the idea of a "distinctive vision" is nearly as obvious as the Golden Dome or Touchdown Jesus. While many American universities might struggle to define how they are "different" from others, Notre Dame has never had this problem. The goal of building a truly great, international Catholic research university in the United States has long been part of the Notre Dame ethos—and certainly since the notable presidency of Father Theodore Hesburgh. Roche asserts that his own articulation of Notre Dame's particular vision when he became dean in 1997 "has since become in many ways the self-understanding of Notre Dame and its current leadership" (p. 65). But the book reveals that what Roche (and presumably others) really brought to the table was a set of savvy, focused, and ambitious strategies to further advance Hesburgh's vision from an ideal to something like a reality.

In describing his own role in this remarkable achievement, Roche provides an anecdote-rich account of how to use his preferred techniques of flexibility, competition, monetary and other incentives, accountability and—crucially—community building to enhance both distinctiveness and excellence. A consistent undercurrent in the book is that, before he arrived, Notre Dame was—despite its distinctive vision and high ambitions—still quite insular, ingrown, mediocre, and self-satisfied. Many of Roche's strategies and tactics were designed to disturb this complacency and promote an academic excellence in line with the Catholic vision. While Roche emphasizes that any college dean is the "conductor of an orchestra made up entirely of composers," he explains how he used everything from reallocating budget lines and splitting departments to staff birthday celebrations and donor cultivation to make Notre Dame's arts and letters truly first rate. And whatever the multiple causes, it is certainly true that his university, and college, has become, by almost any measure, one of the top twenty research universities in the United States.

While administrative strategy and savvy are absolutely essential, it sure helps to have lots of money! I lost track of the innumerable times in Roche's narrative where the availability of discretionary dollars enabled the dean to improve his college in dramatic ways. Among the instances: building a 150,000 square-foot performing arts center from scratch and attracting endowed faculty from Princeton and Yale to staff it; using clever recruitment techniques, scholarships, and departmental honors programs to attract and retain top students; teaching multiple languages from Quechua to Korean, among other things, to foster internationalization; developing special funds for hiring and retaining minority and female faculty; providing postdoctoral funding for
Ph.D. students; and adding eighty newly funded faculty positions and fifty endowed chairs. And many more. Most startlingly, Roche reveals that, unlike probably 99 percent of American colleges, Notre Dame never had to cut its budget after the 2008 recession, and instead received budgetary increases (p. 127).

While many of Roche's strategies could surely be adapted by others, one wonders how successful they might be for the vast majority of academic leaders who face ever-more-stringent budget pinches and economic rebellions from constituencies and the wider public. Roche frequently and correctly emphasizes the tremendous diversity of American higher education as one of its strengths. But almost all of his examples are drawn from the very top private and public research universities and elite liberal arts colleges, with a few nods to community colleges as places of practical training and remediation. The largest sector of American higher education, however, consists of non-elite four-year colleges, master's-level institutions (including many former Catholic women's colleges), and the prevalent second-and-third tier public universities that educate most students. These institutions are seldom alluded to. Any academic leader from any kind of college or university could assuredly learn a great deal from the book, but those who work in such settings might first have to resist becoming green with envy.

Nevertheless, anyone associated with Christian higher education can only be grateful that the nation's leading Catholic university has been led by such wise and successful academic leaders as Roche. Along with a small handful of other church-related research universities—Georgetown, Boston College, St. Louis, Baylor, and Marquette—Notre Dame has begun to undermine, through tangible demonstration, one of deep narratives regarding American higher education: that there is an inverse relationship between faith and academic excellence, and that as universities become academically excellent they must become more secular.

Roche's book, and his work, shows why that zero-sum equation is false. And not least of those is elevating a kind of academic leadership that is attentively personal as well as toughly managerial. Near the book's conclusion, Roche movingly describes what I think is one of the central virtues necessary to creating and leading a genuine academic community: "To take joy in the success of others is a privileged and often neglected virtue, one that tends to surface only when one has a meaningful sense of collective identity; and the exercise of that virtue as one assumes a leadership position further reinforces one's identification with the community" (p. 45). While deriving joy from others' accomplishments might occur anywhere, I suspect that such feelings are more likely to be evoked in communities—including academic ones—where personal achievements are viewed in the light of grace. Mark Roche's book helps remind us why such places, such leaders, and such virtues, are to be cherished and nurtured. 

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We get no good
By being ungenerous, even to a book,
And calculating profits—so much help
By so much reading. It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge
Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's profound,
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth—
'Tis then we get the right good from a book.
—Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
“Aurora Leigh” 1.702-09

Into the Wilderness

Paul J. Willis

IN THE COLLEGE WHERE I TEACH THERE IS NOW an Office of Educational Effectiveness—which, to increase its Orwellian elegance, may as well be called the Office of Efficacious Educational Effectiveness. I have suggested we ban the term educational effectiveness and replace it with the word learning.

But what do I know?

The administrators in this office are dead set on measuring student learning outcomes, as they call them. As far as I can tell, measurable student learning outcomes are a figment of the utilitarian imagination. But the federal government and our accrediting agency believe in them—they very much believe in them—so we are told that we must believe in them as well. It so happens that the abbreviation for student learning outcome, SLO, is the same as that for a neighboring town, San Luis Obispo. I do believe in San Luis Obispo, so that is a start, I suppose.

I have a tendency to stand up in faculty meetings and start and stammer and blush and say that we are in danger of unweaving the rainbow, that for all our efforts to quantify them, teaching and learning remain a mysterious art, not an exact science. “I am not data!” I once announced. “My students are not data! I am so tired of hearing about data!” Then there was a long silence, and I was conscious of having said something overwrought and maybe even very stupid.

But this is an issue that does not go away for me. I lie in bed making up speeches to the faculty and administration. One of them goes like this: “Do we want to be a college? Do we want to be a liberal arts college? Do we want to be a Christian liberal arts college? Or do we want to be some junior varsity version of IBM?” (Thunderous applause.)

Just recently, I had a full year off from teaching, perhaps my last sabbatical before I retire. For several months I got to be an artist-in-residence in North Cascades National Park. My whole job there was to hike around and write poems about what I saw—which I did, with abandon. (Your tax dollars at work!) But I also found myself, in between poems, writing and recovering essays that seemed to be about learning—the kinds of learning I have done over a lengthening lifetime. Some of this learning has happened in the official capacity of student or teacher; some of it on the sly.

None of this learning can tolerate the confines of San Luis Obispo. In some cases it has taken thirty, forty, or fifty years to arrive at a kernel or narrative of reflection. I found myself noting in one particular essay that curiosity, love, and wonder always take circuitous paths toward understanding. That’s a hill I am willing to die on, as they say, so I have elevated these dying words into a mantra for my teaching. And gratitude is part of it as well, I think—gratitude for new and immeasurable understandings.

David Warren, president of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, recently said, “Why are we letting data geeks determine how we value an education? It’s not a quantifiable product” (Edwards, 2014: 35). I copied that quote in an email to our administration and heard back, at length, within thirty
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limits. From our backyard, we looked across a dip of pasture to a tall ridge of Douglas fir in the Coast Range. On summer evenings, fresh winds from the ocean blew through those Doug firs, and I took this as an invitation, sometimes hiking alone for a day or two just to see what was there in the university-owned forest.

In high school my older brother and I began climbing the volcanic peaks of the Cascades, which we could also see from our house, east across the Willamette Valley. Then, in college, we began guiding wilderness trips together in the Sierra Nevada, the Trinity Alps, the Wallowa Mountains—as well as in the Cascade Range. And, eventually, we both became involved in grueling, on-the-ground political efforts to save and preserve wilderness.

All this must have informed my teaching. I think of a poem, a play, a class as a wilderness area full of unanticipated delights. Recently a friend and I went on a two-week backpack trip without a map, and this suited us just fine. “The freshness, the freedom, the farness,” writes Robert Service in “The Spell of the Yukon”—“O God! how I’m stuck on it all” (Service, 1940: 4).

If a classroom is like a wilderness area, I do not want to presume that I know what we will find there together. So I do not like to over-script my syllabi. I especially do not want to be in the fraudulent business of predicting measurable student learning outcomes. The classroom is not a factory—it’s a wilderness area. That is the metaphor I carry within me.

You can calculate the number of board feet of timber in a forest, but once you have done that, it’s no longer a forest—it’s a pile of lumber on the ground. We need to step lightly on the path, be alert to what lies in wait beyond every switchback, every silent turn of the page, every hand that is not quite raised.

“Well,” I say as a teacher. “Will you look at that . . .”

But to all of you data geeks in the Offices of Efficacious Educational Effectiveness Everywhere, let me say that I am grateful even for you. Were it not for the irritations you daily provide, I might never have ventured quite so consciously upon these musings. (And were it not for the irritations I daily provide to you as well, your own lives would perhaps be much less interesting.) Also, it is just possible that in your feeble heart of hearts you do want people to learn, and that in my febrile heart of hearts I want people to learn too, so we might still have something in common. So, though I refuse to fill out your surveys and chart your charts and graph your graphs, I hope you will accept the outcome of my own meandering thoughts.

In other words, peace be with you.

But also with me.

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Works Cited


SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

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ON THE POETS

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