A Symposium On

Exiles from Eden
by Mark Schwehn

Practicing Our Faith
edited by Dorothy Bass

Leading Lives That Matter
edited by Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass

With Contributions From
Mel Piehl, Michael Beaty, Mark W. Roche, Susan VanZanten, Stephanie Paulsell, Craig Dykstra, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Frederick Niedner, Dan P. McAdams, Paul J. Contino, Kaethe Schwehn, John Schwehn, and Martha Schwehn Bardwell

Valparaiso University
On the cover: John August Swanson (b. 1938). A Visit, 1995. Serigraph print. 38 1/2" X 14 1/2".

John August Swanson makes his home in Los Angeles, California, where he was born in 1938. He paints in oil, watercolor, acrylic, and mixed media and is an independent printmaker of limited edition serigraphs, lithographs, and etchings. His art reflects the strong heritage of storytelling he inherited from his Mexican mother and his Swedish Lutheran father. Swanson’s serigraph A Visit is a chronicle of God’s presence among humanity as depicted in scenes from Creation to the Annunciation to Mary. The artist gave permission to Valparaiso University to use his work as the centerpiece for its Advent Christmas Vespers service held in the Chapel of the Resurrection on December 13, 2013. An original serigraph of A Visit will be presented to the Christ College Art Collection in Valparaiso University’s Brauer Museum in honor of Dorothy Bass and Mark Schwehn.

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A MODERN FESTSCHRIFT
In Honor of Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass

The year was 1640. Gregor Ritzsch, a poet of Lutheran hymns and owner of the Leipzig Book print shop, decided that it would be apropos to celebrate the bicentennial of the invention of the art of printing. He called upon a number of poets to contribute to the first Festschrift (festival of writing) to commemorate the noteworthy occasion.

In similar fashion, it is apropos for a Lutheran University to give thanks for its resident inventors. This Special Edition of The Cresset commemorates two members of Valparaiso University upon their retirement at the end of this 2014 academic year, Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass. This symposium of writings celebrates their artful contributions to the dual lives of university and church. They have cultivated scholarly attention and interest. They have created community vital to a university's existence. They have raised a family while nurturing several generations of students, academic institutions, churches, and what could be called "our common life."

Current and former faculty members, students and scholars, family and friends, congregation members and church leaders all contribute to this modern Festschrift. They ruminate and provoke, praise and critique, remember and compel we readers to think about what these good and faithful servants have done for Valparaiso University, the church, and the world.

These articles are joined by John August Swanson's serigraph A Visit which draws a viewer to witness salvation history unfold in the midst of a community by seeing the sacred story told in murals on the buildings of the village's streets. The characters of the Biblical drama, some of which are highlighted in this edition's poems, chronicle God's movement throughout all of human existence and point toward how God's redeeming work punctuates the rhythms of daily living.

It is with deep gratitude that the Office for Campus Ministries partners with The Cresset to offer this printed glimpse into the lives and careers of these two who live among us as scholars, teachers, administrators, colleagues, parents, friends, and people of deep faith.

Brian Johnson
Executive Director of Campus Ministries
Valparaiso University
**IN LUCE TUA**

*In Thy Light*

**On Virtue and Practice**

**A**

T THE END OF THIS ACADEMIC YEAR, Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass will retire after long careers of leadership and service in both academy and church. Mark Schwehn has served as Professor of Humanities, Dean of Christ College, Project Director of the Lilly Fellows Program in the Humanities and the Arts, and—most recently—Provost of Valparaiso University. Dorothy Bass, after teaching church history at Chicago Theological Seminary for ten years, became Director of the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith. While this list of titles is impressive, no such list can adequately convey the true nature or extent of their service. Through their scholarship and lives, Mark and Dorothy have helped so many of us recognize how we might discern and respond to our callings in the world. As colleagues, teachers, mentors, and friends, they have guided us to a better understanding of what it means to be members of a community of learning where the pursuit of truth is shaped by the virtues and practices of the Christian tradition. In this Special Edition of *The Cresset*, our writers reflect on all of Mark and Dorothy's contributions, but they center their reflections here on three books that they have written.

Mark's *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (Oxford University Press, 1993) is among the most important books on Christian higher education to be published in recent years. In it, he presents a meticulously researched history of the emergence of the modern research university, a history that demonstrates how a task once considered central to the academic vocation—the formation of moral character—was gradually eclipsed by the mandate to produce new knowledge. Mark argues that since the academic enterprise depends on certain virtues—including humility, faith, self-sacrifice, and charity—those who follow this vocation today must recover the notion that it is best pursued within communities of learning in which such virtues are practiced and cultivated.

Dorothy's *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (Jossey-Bass, 1997) is a book that has been profoundly influential in both the academy and the church. It presents twelve essays on Christian practices, things that Christians do together in response to the presence of God among us. The collection gave new direction to scholarly thinking about the relationship between spirituality and the creaturely needs we experience every day; it also furthered the work of the Valparaiso Project, an effort to provide resources that religious congregations could use to revitalize their own practices.

Together Mark and Dorothy edited *Leading Lives That Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be* (Eerdmans, 2006), a wide-ranging collection of texts that explores many of the most basic questions that confront us when we take the time to ponder how we are living our lives. This collection of readings that both challenge and inspire has been adopted for use in courses at universities across the country.

Also in this Special Edition are contributions from Mark and Dorothy's family. In the center of the issue, we include four of Kaethe Schwehn's Tanka poems. The Biblical characters that are the subject of each poem are included in the details from John August Swanson's *A Visit* that are printed in the backgrounds. At the end of the issue, you will find two essays written by John Schwehn and Martha Schwehn Bardwell in which they reflect on the process of discovering their own callings in life.

Whatever the vocation to which we are called, the prolonged effort to live lives of meaning and integrity will require virtue, and these virtues will be absent in us if we lack practices through which we might learn them. Humility, faith, self-sacrifice, and charity. Those of us who have come to know Mark and Dorothy have been fortunate to have two such fine models of these virtues to inspire us in our practice.

—JPO
MARK SCHWEHN'S EXILES FROM EDEN IS A slender book. When I went to check it out from the library's shelves, its thin spine and 143 pages made it seem positively undernourished amidst the thick tomes of academic history and college studies surrounding it. Yet as anyone who has read and pondered Exiles knows, this little volume is packed with richer intellectual nutrients than most of those weightier books. Its account of "religion and the academic vocation in America" has already had an outsized impact on the ways that many Christian academics and intellectuals think about their own callings, university life, and the institutions where they work. And its longer term impact may be only beginning.

When Exiles from Eden was first published in 1993, no one could have imagined the vast flood of criticism that has since overtaken American higher education. Especially in recent years, that "tsunami" has challenged many of the core underpinnings of the contemporary university itself, leading even sober analysts, as well as legions of alarmists and naysayers, to predict doom for the entire enterprise.

While some of the current conditions afflicting American colleges, especially the economic ones, are felt more urgently now than two decades ago when Exiles was published, serious critiques of the American university are hardly new. In fact, Exiles from Eden appeared as part of the first major wave of sharply critical accounts that earned substantial public and academic attention in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The book that heralded this tide of often truculent commentary was Allen Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind (1987), one of the most unlikely bestsellers in American history. The University of Chicago mandarin Bloom's sweeping jeremiad purported to show "how higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students" (its subtitle). While the book outraged many in the academy because it accused faculty of pandering to students, and was partly memorable for its rant against rock music, it did signal a growing unease among a wider public that not all was well with the once-celebrated institutions of American higher learning.

Numerous other critical studies followed. Some, like Charles Sykes's Profscam (1988) and Roger Kimball's Tenured Radicals (1990), were muckraking polemics that fed public and political discontents. At the same time, a different strand of analysis and criticism began emerging from within religious academic circles. By far the most influential of these was George Marsden's The Soul of the American University (1994), which traced the history of American higher education's increasingly secular trajectory "from Protestant establishment to established unbelief," and called for a revival of Christian perspectives within elite universities. While Marsden claimed that his was not a "declensionist" narrative simply mourning the loss of religious (actually Protestant) hegemony over the American university, it was widely viewed that way, and many secular academics reacted strongly. Other religiously committed academics, especially in Evangelical and Catholic circles, lamented that even the remaining church-related colleges and universities were well on their way to selling their religious birthright for the potage of academic prestige. This line of attack reached a kind of pinnacle in former Notre Dame Provost
James Burtchaell's detailed and fiercely polemical *The Dying of the Light* (1998), which took a kind of perverse glee in showing how Christian college presidents and others had regularly deployed a vacuous, pious rhetoric to disguise their *de facto* institutional retreat from their earlier connections to their churches and from any serious engagement of faith and learning.

While *Exiles from Eden* thus appeared on the scene as part of this wider intellectual and publishing tide, it is strikingly different. It is, for starters, far more calm and irenic in tone and content than almost anything else in the higher-ed criticism genre, then or since. (A notable exception is Andrew Delbanco's recent *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* [2012].) While Schwehn begins *Exiles* by stating that it is "a critical study of contemporary conceptions of the academic vocation," he simultaneously declares that its aim is to "try to advance our thinking about college and university education in the United States" (emphasis mine). In this opening sentence, then, and throughout the book, Schwehn speaks not as some righteously alienated polemicist, but as a committed and embedded participant in the whole academic enterprise and invites "us," the readers, into a conversation about how to challenge and reform it. *Exiles* reflects the spirit of a critic who loves the university and academic inquiry, and who seeks to improve both through a communal endeavor.

The same is true *a fortiori* of *Exiles*’ religious stance. While Schwehn writes plainly from a religious (specifically Christian) perspective and seeks, like Marsden, to enhance the role and confidence of serious believers within the academy, his book is consistently careful to refrain from claiming any privileged spiritual or intellectual ground for religion, and to underscore the virtues and good will of those with whom it disagrees. This is most striking in his treatment of such nonreligious thinkers as Max Weber, David Hume, and Jeffrey Stout. Weber, Schwehn argues, provided the most sophisticated rationale for the modern secular university’s governing *raison d’être* of research or "making knowledge." But while he sharply criticizes Weber’s limitation of the university’s purposes to *Wissenschaft* and points out flaws in the human character types this conception of academic life produces, Schwehn constantly honors the heroic stoicism of Weber’s ideal and notes that “most of us lack Weber’s discipline and courage.”

Similarly, Schwehn plainly indicts David Hume and Enlightenment secular rationalism for banishing what Hume called the "monkish" virtues of humility and self-sacrifice from the academic enterprise, leading to some of the deformities in the academic character that *Exiles* criticizes. But in the same discussion *Exiles* blames religious people for fostering the superstition and dogmatism—"reading Genesis as a geology text, for example"—that made enlightened criticism both possible and necessary.

*Exiles from Eden* reflects the spirit of a critic who loves the university and academic inquiry, and who seeks to improve both through a communal endeavor. Schwehn implies that when religious people fail to practice the spiritual virtues they profess, like the humility to follow true inquiry and evidence wherever it leads, they are justly shoved to the margins of the academic enterprise. So it is not just the secular academy but religious communities that need to be reformed. If the link between spirituality and learning can be authentically recovered, Schwehn contends, “we might expect that the religious will discover the ethical dimensions of their spirituality at the same time that some academicians rediscover the spiritual dimensions of their ethos” (47).

The contemporary philosopher Jeffrey Stout is also treated with exquisite fairness even as he receives pointed criticism. Stout represents the numerous modern academics who strongly resist any public expressions of religious commitment in the academy’s intellectual activity because it raises the specter of the early modern wars of religion in the West, or of fanatical, conflict-inducing religious ideologies today. Again, Schwehn recognizes the force of Stout’s critiques, while praising the “secular piety” that enables him to acknowledge the necessity of spiritually informed virtues to sustained
academic inquiry. Yet Schwehn makes use of Stout's own premises regarding the necessary grounding of ethics in "feelings, attitudes, inclinations, and character" to advance the argument that religious communities provide a more "robust" foundation than any individual or set of individuals can for the spiritual virtues that make thoroughgoing academic truth-seeking possible. Stout's fears of public religion leading to unrelenting strife can be mitigated by religious traditions that exhibit internal rational dialogue along with faith commitments.

In consistently striking this tone of careful, rational dialogue with those who hold contrary stances—indeed in taking great care to be fair and generous toward the pervasive academic ideology he is taking on—Schwehn both exemplifies and reinforces the very virtues that Exiles argues should be reinstated at the heart of the modern university. This approach absolutely eschews any trace of the "special pleading" or claims for a privileged religious stance that have been so tempting for many Christian critics of secular learning. There are no special appeals to revelation in Exiles, and no reliance on Scripture or ecclesiastical authority (though individual Christian thinkers and Jewish and Christian communities of learning are cited). We might thus say that Exiles from Eden provides a thoroughly secular argument for the centrality of spiritual virtues to the academic enterprise—a far harder case to make, but one less easily dismissed by the most rigorous secular academics.

Exiles from Eden provides a thoroughly secular argument for the centrality of spiritual virtues to the academic enterprise.

Given this judicious and understated tone compared to other works in the same genre, why has Exiles been so influential, and why does it still have truly revolutionary implications for the character of higher education in the United States? First, despite its deceptively modest size and tone, Exiles provides a devastating critique of the fundamental assumptions that have undergirded the great American research and PhD-granting universities since their founding (or, in case of older colleges like the Ivies, de facto reconstruction) in the late nineteenth century. These include research or "making knowledge" as the dominant and by far the most prestigious activity of the university, the epistemological separation of objective knowledge from the character of the persons and communities that generate it, and the close link between particular forms of academically generated knowledge (or "science") and institutional and social power (what Weber calls "mastery of the world through calculation").

Schwehn's penetrating critique of this regnant academic enterprise is most concentrated in the first chapter of Exiles, but constitutes a recurrent theme throughout the book. The almost unrecognized core ideas and assumptions that research universities promulgate about what it means to be an academic and how scholarly status and power are to be hierarchically distributed on the American academic landscape—assumptions internalized by most Christian academics no less than secular ones—rely on certain specific limitations and renunciations that, Schwehn convincingly shows, sharply depart from the greatest traditions of inquiry from the time of Plato and the ancient Hebrews down to the eighteenth century. These assumptions, which typically "trickle down" from the major research universities and academic guilds to teaching institutions via the PhD production and certification process, produce a certain kind of academic character or personality that Schwehn says is characterized by "clarity, but not charity; honesty, but not friendliness; devotion to the calling, but not loyalty to local or particular communities of learning" (18).

Exiles is radical, then, in the sense of going to the roots of the matter it addresses, and because it does not simply bemoan these historical developments, either from the standpoint of Christian commitment or out of nostalgia for some premodern collegiate "world we have lost." Rather, it undertakes to make the challenging argument that traditional communities of learning, which linked
spiritual and moral virtues and practices to the intellectual search for truth, were not simply nicer or more pious places than our modern universities. Rather, Schwehn contends that such virtues actually foster better thinking. Inculcating such virtues as charity, humility, and friendship, Schwehn argues (especially in Chapter Three on “Spirited Inquiry”), is thus not simply a matter of collegiality or interpersonal courtesy or personal piety, but rather an essential prerequisite to deeper forms of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. He persuasively argues that what the philosopher Leon Kass calls “education for thoughtfulness” requires the integration of the two meanings of “thoughtfulness”: clear thinking and constant attention to the well-being and needs of others.

In other words, Exiles advocates restoring the centrality of teaching to the academic enterprise, not out of nostalgia for some pre-modern or medieval or nineteenth-century American Christian world of learning, or because of the need to serve undergraduates, but because the spiritual and ethical discipline required for authentic teaching and learning will create better scholars and wiser human beings. Only such a deep reconfiguration of the academic vocation, Exiles asserts, can restore the value and morale of the university and its academic inhabitants. This is an ambitious and sweeping agenda, easily overlooked amidst the book’s generous and careful tone.

What also makes Exiles both revolutionary and practical for Christian colleges and Christian scholars is that it offers them a way “forward” in a world where they are inevitably and increasingly engaged with widely diverse ideas, faiths, and traditions, even on their own campuses. The age when Christian colleges could pursue subcultural “sheltering” strategies is largely over, and Exiles effectively embraces this new multicultural era. There is no sense in Exiles that Christians (or for that matter Jews or Muslims) should in any sense “circle the wagons” to perpetuate parochial academic traditions or communities. Rather, it implies that they ought to bring into the public, academic arena the virtues that, Schwehn argues, are often best (though not exclusively) fostered in particular religious communities. While church-related institutions and academics may be sorely tempted to operate as apologetic defenders of the faith, a close reading of Exiles suggests that Christian scholars and teachers can best witness not by appeals to revelation, authority, or tradition, but rather by practicing the virtues their faith teaches them and by demonstrating their ability and willingness to engage with all relevant ideas and actors of all perspectives. Schwehn is not seeking to inject a minority Christian or religious perspective into the academic mainstream, but rather to redirect that mainstream itself. This is not a task for the faint-hearted or intellectually lazy. The kind of “teacher” that Exiles seeks to elevate as the model academic would be not a narrow pedagogue or a less rigorous scholar, but rather something akin to a sage whose teaching, writing, and public service would be all of a piece.

How did Schwehn arrive at these sharply counter-cultural perspectives? Exiles itself provides no account of the genealogy of its argument, but it may be useful to cite three contexts relative to understanding where the book came from and how it has been practically received.

The first context is Lutheran Christianity. While much “Christian higher ed” literature has appeared from self-consciously Calvinist or Catholic perspectives, relatively little on the subject has been written by Lutheran scholars. Though the word “Lutheran” never appears in Exiles (although Martin Luther is referenced a couple of times), it is a thoroughly Lutheran book. This is especially so because it embodies one foundational Lutheran perspective on all forms of human cultural achievement: that they are means by which God upholds the world with His “left hand,” but can never become themselves instruments of the “right-hand” order of grace and salvation. Christians can thus bring all their gifts into the world—including spiritually informed gifts of learning and teaching—but should not seek to remake that world to conform with the church, or vice versa. This dual and paradoxical vision means that the Christian academic’s vocation is to do his or her best possible work in the world, not to do average work and add a dollop of piety. As Schwehn also makes clear in his essay, “Lutheranism and the Future of
the University," originally published in The Cresset (Advent-Christmas 2009), his is a thoroughly “catholic” Lutheranism—not a denominational or confessional version—that draws on the widest array of Christian intellectual traditions as well as particular Lutheran insights.

A second relevant context for the book is Valparaiso University. At the beginning of Exiles from Eden, Schwehn references his decision to move from the University of Chicago, a great research university, to Valparaiso, a “relatively small university in northwest Indiana’s snow belt” that was “far from perfect byChicago’s exacting standards of excellence.” Nevertheless, he found the move attractive because Valparaiso is a church-related university that “strives to keep certain questions alive, such as questions about the relationship between religious faith and the pursuit of truth” (viii–ix).

While these questions are equally alive at many other church-related colleges as well, it is no accident that it was the particular context of Valparaiso University that formed Schwehn’s personal and intellectual interests in these questions and shaped his responses to them. Valparaiso was an unusual institution that emerged from the context of the highly “conservative” Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Designed to “furnish an educated laity for the church,” as distinct from seminaries or teaching-training institutions, it was formed entirely independent of church control, so that its connection to the faith was always generated from within rather than determined from without. This was especially the case under the university’s longtime president, O. P. Kretzmann, who fostered an atmosphere that combined deep commitment to the Lutheran and Christian tradition with an enthusiastic engagement with contemporary concerns. Kretzmann and his collaborators were traditional confessional Lutherans, but possessed such a great confidence in their religious tradition that they could approach the most difficult cultural and public questions with openness and willingness to learn.

This essential posture—a religious grounding robust enough not to melt in the face of sophisticated learning and critique, yet willing to engage with the best of what secular culture has to offer on its own terms—gives Exiles from Eden its rare force. Schwehn nowhere says or implies that church-related colleges like Valparaiso have some privileged access to knowledge or insight. But it is evident throughout Exiles that such settings can encourage attention to matters of faith and learning that most modern universities have long since dismissed as archaic. Valparaiso’s capacity to sustain this dialogue is clearly what made it a formative setting for Schwehn, and his own penetrating advancement of that conversation represents a mature flowering of Valparaiso’s founding vision and spirit.

Another product of Valparaiso’s original vision, and the third context considered here, is Christ College, Valparaiso’s honors college, where Schwehn has spent much of his career and served as an influential dean. Christ College was another of Kretzmann’s attempts to marry a religiously grounded sensibility with academic rigor and intellectual openness. Several of Christ College’s features reflect the kind of distinctly “counter-cultural” vision for the academy that Exiles advocates. First, it aimed to combat the increasing fragmentation and specialization of the university by creating a small interdisciplinary faculty who would raise questions according to their innate importance rather than the disciplinary guilds’ agendas. Second, it has challenged the divorce of character and values from academic inquiry by creating a strong community of teachers and students who work to place “love of learning” at the heart of their work. And third, it links faith and learning by bringing the Christian intellectual tradition into open, lively conversation.
with the best of secular culture, including the arts. In Christ College, Schwehn had an unconventional institutional setting where his own alternative vision of the academy could be nurtured, and which he could in turn use to promote the practices and character that *Exiles from Eden* upholds.

This vision has been especially realized on a larger stage through Schwehn’s founding of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts at Christ College. The program’s aim was to “strengthen the quality and shape the character of church-related institutions of higher learning in the twenty-first century” by bringing fresh PhDs to Valparaiso for two years to renew their sense of the academic vocation in a church-related context and by creating a network of church-related colleges and universities seeking to deepen their commitment and enliven their conversations about the relationship of faith and learning. The Lilly Fellows Program was, in effect, a discrete attempt to implement practically some of the ideas proposed in *Exiles from Eden*. While numerous other critiques of higher education have pointed to deep flaws in the current university, *Exiles* is perhaps the only one to test its ideas by creating an actual institutional reform. The Lilly Fellows Program has succeeded remarkably in its aims, even as it has undergone change and expansion in its activities. At its core it has worked to uphold Schwehn’s vision that faith, and the virtues nurtured by faith, can bring something fresh and invigorating to academic life.

That renewing energy has most tangibly touched the now nearly one hundred church-related colleges and universities that comprise the Lilly Fellows Network, as well as the growing number of Lilly Postdoctoral and Graduate Fellows sprinkled across American higher education. It may not be too far-fetched to suggest that the LFP may serve as a leaven within the wider American university in the decades to come, with long-term effects we cannot even imagine. When I attended a reunion of former Lilly Fellows several years ago, I was struck by the extraordinary spirit and incredible warmth that they generated. Their papers and conversations combined penetrating intellectual insights, personal reflection, friendship, humor, faith, and sincere devotion to the common good in a way that no other academic gathering I have ever attended has.

Many former Lilly Fellows work in church-related institutions of all kinds, where they are often innovators and leaders in advancing their colleges’ church-related missions. Others work in secular public and private institutions, where they bring their experiences and ideas into settings that may not be as congenial to them. All of these fine teachers and scholars are carrying on the task that Mark Schwehn outlined so persuasively in *Exiles from Eden*. It is a slim book, but embodied in such lives, and in the hearts of its many readers, it still packs a powerful punch.

**Mel Piehl** is Professor of Humanities and History and former Dean of Christ College, Valparaiso University.

**Works Cited**


Creating Communities of Learning

Exiles from Eden and The Revival of Christian Higher Education

Michael Beaty

Mark Schwehn deserves our admiration and praise because of his many accomplishments for Christian higher education and his superlative service at Valparaiso University. He has profoundly influenced not only a significant network of Christian colleges and universities, but also so many of "us," Christian academics, because we were drawn by his good will into "communities of learning" that bore the imprint of his ideas. My task is to focus our attention on the significance of his book, Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation (1993). My thesis is succinct. Christian higher education has experienced a major and somewhat surprising recovery and renewal. Exiles from Eden made very important contributions to this renaissance of Christian higher education.

When Exiles from Eden was published, many assumed that religion generally, and Christianity particularly, was antithetical or peripheral to the primary purposes and practices of universities. But this is odd because once upon a time in the United States, higher education had been largely the project of Christians and Christian churches (Ringenberg 2006). In contrast to the now prevailing secular conception of the university, the sponsorship of higher education by Christians assumed that the intellectual commitments and practices of Christians are not only compatible with the intellectual life and practices of the academy, but also mutually enhancing. But now, this once easy and natural alliance was questionable (Cuninggim 1994). Indeed, in a number of scholarly articles and books, some published prior to Exiles from Eden and some after, the decline and possible demise of Christian higher education as the result of secularization is the principle theme (see: Jenks and Riesman 1968; Burtchaell 1992; Sloan 1994; Marsden 1994; Gleason 1995). That this decline was perceived to be a function of a possible intellectual incompatibility between the aims and self-understanding of the modern university and the aims and aspirations of religiously-grounded higher education provides the intellectual and social context for Exiles from Eden.

Schwehn begins with two stories that point to deep tensions in the practices and conception of the modern university. One is the apocryphal and familiar lament by some faculty member about how the demands of teaching or service to the university "make it difficult to get my work done." The second references former Harvard President Derek Bok's 1986–87 report to the Harvard Board of Overseers in which Bok both insists that universities have an obligation to help their students live ethically fulfilling lives and laments that university professors are ill-equipped to help achieve this end (Schwehn, 3). To these stories, let me add another. A colleague of mine recently returned from a meeting at a sister Christian university where he discussed the importance of "great texts" in a Christian liberal arts education. He underscored the familiar theme that liberal arts education is not about "making a living" but "making a life"—in short, that it is about the moral formation of students. A faculty member of this university challenged the claim, arguing that aiming at moral formation is unprofessional because it is not one of the competencies that faculty develop during their graduate education.
According to Schwehn, what these familiar stories share are certain pervasive and widely shared assumptions about the nature and ends of a university and about the academic vocation. What are they?

The mission statements of most universities identify three fundamental goals as essential ends of their institutions: (1) discovering or making knowledge (research and publication); (2) preserving and transmitting knowledge (teaching and learning); (3) helping students to lead ethically fulfilling lives (moral education and education for citizenship). The common lament of faculty members that they are getting very little of their own work done when teaching or advising is coherent only if (1) is the sole constituent of the academic vocation. The third story confirms Bok's worry that most faculty are ill-disposed and ill-prepared to help students learn to live ethically fulfilling lives, and these unsavory faculty responses are a function of how faculty members now understand "being a professional academic." It is equally clear that if these stories are representative of most faculty members in the academy, then the three goals are not envisioned as parts of a unified mission, but as competing aims, with (1) having hegemony over the other two.

Schwehn turns to Max Weber's well-known essay, "Science as Vocation." Weber claims that the sole purpose of the university is the production of new knowledge, which is achieved by free, unconstrained pursuit and is best done via scholars organized into academic disciplines, whose subject matter grounds their distinctiveness and whose expertise includes initiation into specialized modes of inquiry. Weber insisted that the academic calling has nothing to do with character formation, questions about the meaning of life, or how one ought to live. The academic calling is entirely value-free or value-neutral.

Ironically, in order to present his new understanding of the academic vocation, Weber uses a religious vocabulary, but subverts the Protestant understandings of Christian vocation in so doing. The Protestant Christian regards her particular work as a vocation fitted by God's providence to cohere with the good work of other men and women in a variety of "secular" vocations. Jointly, the various kinds of work promote human flourishing, the common good, or the realization of God's Kingdom here and now. This is because the Protestant understanding of vocation is finally a communal enterprise that embraces charity, friendship, and life enhancing practices for the sake of God and one's neighbor. In contrast, in Weber's Godless world, the end the academic vocation serves is merely and only the production of new knowledge merely for the sake of new knowledge.

Schwehn rejects the Weberian conception of the academic vocation. In doing so, he provides both a diagnosis of the modern university's deep difficulties and a robust remedy.

Equally chilling, Weber's ascetic hero of the academic calling is a solitary, alienated, and friendless martyr to this essentially nihilistic understanding of the academic vocation.

If, as Weber proposed, universities serve the public good by being the kind of place in which the scholar engages in value-neutral inquiries, in which character formation is eschewed, and in which the larger questions of meaning and purpose are off limits, then Christian colleges and universities have four logical options. First, they can divest themselves of any thick religious identity and, over time, become secular institutions. Second, they can identify with a particular religious community, seeking primarily to serve its good, and not seek to serve the public good by serving "everyone." Third, they can embrace the view that faith is primarily a private matter and education is a public matter and attempt to serve both at the same time. On this view, faith will be an "add on" to the primary educational practices of the university. Finally, they can reject the Weberian conception of the university.

Schwehn does just that; he rejects the Weberian conception of the academic vocation.
In doing so, he provides both a diagnosis of the modern university’s deep difficulties and a robust remedy. And, ironically, given the narrative of the modern university, the robust remedy includes a deepened and more self-conscious exercise of “spiritual” resources, resources that many contemporary practices in the university need in order to be successful, yet which, because of the prevailing Weberian ethos, are obscured from view (Schwehn, 128). Thus, Schwehn provides a blueprint for a renewal of higher education in general, and of Christian higher education in particular.

Schwehn’s remedy includes the following elements. First, rather than elevating and isolating research and publication from teaching and the moral formation of students, Schwehn emphasizes the unified character of these three aims. If one of the three has a priority of place, it is teaching, but neither at the expense of research nor the moral formation of students, for both may grow naturally out of the practices of good teaching. Second, rather than regarding the university as a collection of individuals, each sovereign but isolated and bearing no essential relation to another, Schwehn insists that we regard the university as a community of learning, not merely a collection of individuals. Third, given its educational aims, such a community will require of its participants the possession of certain fundamental virtues, insofar as they labor to achieve common academic goods. Among them are humility, faith, self-denial, and charity. Schwehn refers to them as “spiritual virtues” to underscore their religious significance. Indeed, as he notes, religious communities are their “original” home. Yet, they have both meaning and significance independent of their original communities of origin. To illustrate, participants in a community of learning must, in order to achieve the aims of learning communities, be humble (willing to learn from others), engage in acts of self-denial (postpone short-term self-interest for long-term gains), exercise both faith (accept the testimony of others) and charity (will the good of others for their sake).

If Schwehn is correct that these virtues are essential for successful participation in good learning communities, Christian colleges and universities will be especially well-suited to nurture and sustain communities of learning, since such virtues are natural constituents of their shared life. As a community of learning, the Christian university has an antidote to some of the malaises of the modern university. Indeed, Schwehn is in a position not only to reject the Weberian conception of academic vocation and offer in its place “education in and for thoughtfulness” (136) as a more suitable end for higher education, but is also in a position to advocate for a more distinctively Christian understanding of the academic vocation. Just as one cannot be religious in general, says Schwehn, but only in particular by virtue of one’s engagement in a particular religious tradition, so there is little value in speaking of academic vocation in general. Much more is to be gained by speaking about academic vocation from the perspective of participation in a “particular religious tradition” (136). Within the perspective of Christians, for whom a call requires a caller and for whom the Caller is both the Creator and the Savior of humankind, the spiritual virtues of humility, self-denial, faith, and charity are given deeper meanings because they are embedded in the large and compelling narrative about God’s calling and cultivation of His people via Covenant, Christ, Church, and Consummation. Jesus’ story and the stories of saints and martyrs and of ordinary people who have followed Him give vivid liveliness to our understanding of humility, self-denial, faith, and charity. Moreover, it will be no surprise that emboldened by these narratives and enlivened by Christian virtues, genuine Christian communities of learning are likely to flourish. In these, charity and friendship, virtues that Weber banished from the university, will be recovered and within such universities, helping students live ethically fulfilling lives will be a natural aim of its pedagogical aspirations, as natural as making knowledge.

The Important Effects of Exiles from Eden

Exiles from Eden gave Baylor University the conceptual resources to diagnose weaknesses in its institutional self-understanding and embrace strategies for renewal. For example, after Baylor severed its historic ties with the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1990, concerns surfaced about this dramatic change leading to Baylor’s becoming a secular university, given the well-
known historic pattern of secularization in higher education. The reigning way of speaking about Baylor's Christian identity was that Baylor provided "an excellent education in a Christian, caring environment," a two-sphere view (Sloan 1994; Beaty, Buras, and Lyon 1997). Baylor is a university because it serves the public good by research and teaching. Baylor is Christian because it provides students a caring environment in which private religious faith is acknowledged and encouraged. Given that the Weberian conception of academic vocation is the pervasive understanding of the academic profession, and that Baptists tend to be Pietists in their theological orientation, it is hardly surprising that a two-sphere view was the dominant way of speaking about Baylor's Christian identity (Beaty and Buras 1998).

Exiles from Eden did three things, in light of the pervasive two-sphere view at Baylor:

- It provided a stark articulation of the Weberian conception of academic vocation.
- It showed that the Weberian understanding of the academic vocation was a recent development that self-consciously rejected an orientation toward God.
- It showed that Weber’s conception of the academic vocation was dependent on a religious vocabulary, one whose full richness as an intellectual and spiritual tradition provided an alternative conception of academic vocation.

Exiles from Eden provided Baylor with an academic justification for the recovery of a Christian conception of the academic vocation.

Baylor University remains a place where the Lordship of Jesus Christ is embraced, studied, and celebrated. We love God with our heart, so we are compelled to care for one another and to address the challenges of our hurting world. We love God with our soul, so we are called to worship Him and to serve Him in building His church. We love God with our mind, so we are called to instruction, research, scholarship, and creative endeavors that truth may be discovered and disseminated, beauty revealed, and goodness honored.

The fruits of this two-decade process are many. Two key documents of recent origin, Baylor 2012 and Pro Futuris, are among them (and within them other fruits are expressed). In contrast to some previous mission statements which expressed Baylor's Christian identity as a kind of add-on to its central mission as a university, Pro Futuris expresses teaching and learning, moral formation and service, and research and publication as a unity grounded fundamentally in Baylor's pervasive Christian identity. One place this is visible is in a section called Baylor's Distinctive Mission:

Exiles from Eden provided Baylor with an academic justification for the recovery of a Christian conception of the academic vocation.

Serious reflection on the main themes from Exiles from Eden prompted Baylor to embrace a number of new initiatives and practices whose aim is to nurture and sustain a sense of academic vocation at Baylor (and beyond) that is grounded in, and an expression of, the Christian faith. I mention only three of the couple of dozen new initiatives Baylor developed as expressions of its revitalized self-understanding.
The most important new initiative was the founding of the Baylor Institute for Faith and Learning in 1997 "to assist Baylor in achieving its mission of integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment, and its goal of becoming a university of the first rank committed to its Baptist and Christian heritage" (http://www.baylor.edu/itl/index.php?id=70010). One primary means for achieving this aim is Communio: A Retreat for Faculty. The retreat has three goals: (1) to acquaint faculty members with a theological understanding of vocation; (2) to explore the implications of Christian understanding of the academic vocation for teaching and scholarship; (3) to enhance a faculty member's ability to mentor students, especially with respect to helping them discover their Christian vocation. The retreat is held annually at beautiful Laity Lodge in the Hill Country of central Texas (http://www.baylor.edu/itl/index.php?id=70496).

Two other programs sponsored by the Institute for Faith and Learning aim at students. The Conyers Graduate Scholars Program, co-sponsored with the Graduate School, "invites a small cohort of current graduate students in the humanities to reflect upon the intersection of knowledge, learning, and Christian faith as they begin their journey as members of the academy.... the Conyers Graduate Scholars are encouraged to explore what it means to understand their work as scholars in their various disciplines as a form of Christian service or a vocatio, a religious vocation" (http://www.baylor.edu/itl/index.php?id=77361). A central practice is the Friday Symposium. Several times a semester, graduate students gather for dinner at a faculty or pastoral mentor's home for dinner and a discussion of an important text (http://www.baylor.edu/graduate/index.php?id=77079).

The Crane Scholars is a program that identifies academically ambitious undergraduate students who are considering the academic life as a profession. It invites some to join a cohort of fellow students who will read and discuss challenging texts led by two faculty members who serve as mentors. Entering the program as sophomores, students have a different pair of mentors each of the three years. Its primary aim is to enable "students to think of an academic or professional career as a form of Christian service or a vocatio, a religious vocation" (http://www.baylor.edu/itl/index.php?id=70499). Dinners, retreats, seminars, and other events help sustain an intellectual community whose goods include rich discussions about faith and "the life of the mind."

Both programs intend to nourish the next generation of Christian scholars and teachers. In them, new friendships are made or deepened. Faculty members are included, becoming mentors and examples of Christian scholars and teachers. Both are examples of "communities of learning," grounded in Christian friendship and charity. These two programs for students and the Communio for faculty have been enormously successful.

Exiles from Eden also prompted a desire at Baylor to seek additional institutional friends who share a Christian identity, but whose Christian or geographical identity were more diverse than previous relationships. Prior to its charter change in 1990, Baylor's primary sources of public identity were: (1) being a Texas Baptist university and "owned and operated by the General Baptist Convention of Texas" and (2) being a Southern Baptist university because of its membership in the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Universities (now the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities). Founded in 1991, the Lilly Fellows Program for the Arts and Humanities and one of its primary initiatives, the Lilly Fellows National Network of Church-Related Colleges and Universities provided an opportunity for a broader, more diverse set of institutional friends.

In 1991, Baylor was invited to be one of the founding members of the Lilly Fellows Program. Provost Donald Schmeltekopf eagerly responded to Lilly's invitation and Baylor joined twenty-six institutions in the network. The network's membership included Catholic, Reformed/Presbyterian, Lutheran, Churches of Christ, Mennonite, and Evangelical but non-denominational schools. Three traditionally black institutions joined. And two institutions were Baptist (Furman and Baylor). Today, the Lilly Fellows Network includes nearly one hundred church-related universities, representing an impressive array of Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Evangelical institutions.
of various sizes, geographical regions, and educational aims (research universities, comprehensive universities, small liberal arts colleges). The Lilly National Network of Church-Related Colleges both confirmed and inspired Baylor’s efforts toward renewal, opening Baylor up to exceedingly good influences from far beyond our familiar Baptist and largely Southern network of institutional friends. Indeed, former Provost Schmeltekopf recently said, “I can’t imagine the enhanced academic aspirations and revitalization of Christian character at Baylor without the inspiration of the Lilly Fellows Program for the Arts and Humanities” (phone conversation, September 2013).

The significant contributions of *Exiles from Eden* to Baylor University surely support Don Schmeltekopf’s assertion that no single person outside the Baylor community made such an important impact on Baylor than Mark Schwehn. And I contend that it is a safe generalization to claim no single person made a more significant impact on Christian higher education in the last three decades than the very same—Mark Schwehn.

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**Works Cited**


On Realizing an Alternative Concept
of Academic Vocation

Mark W. Roche

Several books tell the tale of the secularization of the American academy. An
even larger number offer strong critiques
of the contemporary American university. Mark Schwehn’s meditation on the meaning and purpose
of academic life, Exiles from Eden, stands out
in this crowd for several reasons. Mark’s book is
beautifully written, at times even poetic; impeccably clear while being attentive to subtlety and nuance; and animated by his deep desire to do justice to the institutions and works he is discussing, as well as by a profound conviction that when we are discontented, our sacred task is not to hate the world but to seek to understand it and intelligently draw attention to the ways in which it differs from how it should be. Further, whereas Mark points to a number of internal contradictions in the academy, he is remarkably consistent: he is charitable toward, and does justice to, his interlocutors just as he professes the virtues of charity and justice; he suggests we move beyond merely disinterested knowledge and so uses his diagnosis of the past and present to shed light on what might still be done; and he adopts a proleptic approach, integrating the objections of others in a dialogue, not with questions and answers, but, more modestly, with “questions and considerations.”

Whereas the jeremiads have quickly been forgotten, Mark’s book and the topics he raises have gained in importance. The tension between research and teaching has continued to increase. The idea that teaching amounts to nothing more than fostering critical thinking and disciplinary methodology has only intensified, moving from Max Weber’s early analysis to Stanley Fish’s repeated claims that the teaching of virtues and values has no place at the university. As university faculty seek to advance research ever further, they often long for a missing sense of community. And the idea that universities can best compete and that the landscape of American higher education is most enriched when there is diversity in mission has been reinforced in the past two decades.

Although Mark’s essay is rich and complex, I see, above all, three overarching arguments:

First, research has usurped teaching as the core element of the academic vocation. Specialization, while necessary for the advancement of knowledge, has often led us away from the larger telos of education. We suffer from a university investment and reward system that elevates research over teaching and specialization over breadth. Faculty know that their scholarly contributions are most likely to be accepted if they attend to finite innovations in method and carve out discrete spheres of inquiry. The result is less investment in teaching, less teaching that engages the great questions or transcends disciplinary content and methods, and the loss of teaching as a primary calling.

Second, certain virtues, religious in origin and best reinforced by religious practices, are necessary conditions of the search for truth. In making this claim, Mark returns not only to the Christian tradition but also to Plato, who shows how virtues are necessary for the pursuit of knowledge. The insight still holds today. For example, to listen carefully to the views of others and to weigh them honestly, even if they should contradict our initial inclinations, is to practice a form of justice, and to challenge the views of interlocutors without mak-
ing the attack personal and thus without drawing their eyes away from the search for truth is to practice diplomacy. For Socrates and the young Plato, not only are virtues necessary for the pursuit of knowledge, knowledge also leads to virtue. This now counterintuitive claim derives from the belief, which Mark shares and which most college students wish to experience in their classes, that knowledge can change you as a person.

Third, friendship, love, and community help foster a truly flourishing academic environment. Mark understands community both synchronically and diachronically; our connection to tradition is another way of fostering community. Yet scholars, especially in the humanities, are often absorbed not with what is around them and what already exists but with what they can invent and what will make them marketable. They identify less and less with their local college community. The teacher-scholar whose identity involves fostering the community of learning at her own institution is devalued in relation to the scholar who identifies above all with her discipline.

All three topics are linked, for the first suggests that teaching matters, the second that teaching and research presuppose and foster virtues, and the third that the highest social virtues are friendship and love and that these are at home in the classroom. All three foster a sense of wholeness.

Mark's analysis explains much of the anthropology of higher education: the odd mix of feelings among academics that what they do is infinitely important and yet that what they do is not recognized by anyone and so without value, a contradictory set of feelings that derives from the inability to recognize the modest but legitimate place of one's own research in the wider sphere of the unity of knowledge. It also explains the academy's falling prey to what Giambattista Vico called the "barbarism of reflection," the emergence of an empty reasoning that has lost any contact to substantial contents, a strategic attitude toward fellow human beings, and a lack of roots and traditions and thus of emotional richness.

I want to honor Mark in the remainder of this essay by taking seriously his aspirations and gesturing toward some of the ways in which what he values might become more fully realized. How can those in the academy who recognize the value of teaching, the links between knowledge and virtues, and the role of community help foster these priorities? What tools does an administrator have at her disposal to motivate faculty along these lines?

The power of an administrator lies above all in three areas: vision, personnel, and budget. The most powerful tool is vision. The ideal strategy any university has to motivate faculty members toward its goals is to craft, in concert with faculty members, an appealing vision. When we act because we identify with a vision, we are intrinsically motivated. Repeated allusions to the vision help university constituents build an emotional attachment to the institution and help form a culture and ethos where the vision is central. In addition, hiring, promotion, and leadership decisions determine the personnel who will carry out a vision. Finally, budget expresses vision through differential allocations and priorities.

First, then, a university must articulate a vision, and Mark here is exemplary, having written in compelling and inspiring ways about the idea of a Christian university and about Lutheranism and the future of the university. Moreover, Exiles from Eden offers a vision of the academic vocation. A vision needs to be compelling, and it needs to be communicated and embodied. Vision is partly conveyed nonverbally, and so it is not surprising that as Dean of Christ College at Valparaiso University, Mark continued to teach, mentor students, and publish scholarship.

Second, we can realize the priorities Mark espouses—the value of teaching, the links between knowledge and virtue, and the development of community—if we seek out and recognize those who embody and advance those...
priorities. Ideally, the potential contribution of faculty candidates to teaching and formation is central to the interview process. “Who was your best teacher?” “What attracts you about teaching in this community?” “How will your research help you as a teacher?” Answers to such questions can help committees and administrators sift a potential faculty member’s contribution to teaching and community.

If departments cannot identify candidates who satisfy such expectations, one needs to become creative. One strategy I found advantageous as a dean at the University of Notre Dame was to introduce competitive searches. Invite more departments to search than you have lines available, telling them that you will hire only the very best candidates in the competition. That quickly motivates departments to satisfy an institution’s vision for itself and an administrator’s expectations. Depending on where lines land, you can raise or lower a department’s expected contribution to the general curriculum, and you can challenge departments to compete more efficaciously for hires.

Socializing faculty members effectively interweaves vision and personnel. New faculty members are eager to learn about a college’s vision, history, and customs. The first year on the faculty and the year after tenure, when faculty members are never more curious about their newly permanent home, offer wonderful opportunities for a college to articulate its vision and priorities, to cultivate solidarity with that higher purpose, and to benefit from the ideas of newer faculty members.

On average, universities do a poor job of helping new faculty members understand the ethos of an institution beyond their departments. Ideally, one has not simply a weekend orientation in the fall, but a year-long orientation with multiple engaging events, including time with the president, and selected common readings, which help form a cohort and give faculty insight into the college’s distinctive mission. Similar events can be planned for those who are embarking on administrative roles at the level of chairperson or above.

On smaller campuses the orientation might be led by the president, provost, or dean, and at larger universities one such session might involve reading a document by its president and discussing it with the author. Continuing events across the year allow faculty to renew their relationships across disciplines. Besides ensuring that faculty meet colleagues from other disciplines, thus widening their horizons, such an orientation fosters loyalty and community. It ensures that new faculty understand how the missions of their new and former educational institutions differ.

It is therefore fitting that I can offer as ideal examples of the interweaving of vision and personnel the various programs supported by the Lilly Project that Mark conceived and directs, among them the Lilly Graduate Fellows Program and the Lilly Postdoctoral Fellows Program, which serve not only Valparaiso but the wider community as well.

Finally, appropriate support structures and incentives help to realize a vision. Ideally, the budget is driven by the vision. Support structures and incentives ensure continuity between aspirations and what is necessary to meet those aspirations.

Faculty seminars can be helpful. These might take the form of multi-week summer seminars, compact seminars, reading groups, lecture series, or sets of discussions over the course of a semester. At Notre Dame, we sponsored for some years an annual university-wide, year-long seminar on a topic involving Catholicism, such as the Catholic intellectual tradition or the Catholic
social tradition. Recognizing that many faculty members could not give the requisite time to such a demanding initiative, we also sponsored each semester single-afternoon workshops on aspects of Catholicism. Each workshop offered an introduction to Catholicism, explored a classic work in the Catholic tradition, or engaged a topic involving Catholicism and contemporary society. Analogous seminars and workshops could be structured to advance the priorities and distinctive vision of any university.

A simple workshop can offer faculty practical strategies for expanding their teaching repertoire in order to help students develop virtues. For example, the learning goals on a syllabus might include the development of diverse virtues: from pre-social virtues, such as discipline, to social virtues, such as teamwork. Selected exercises, such as having students co-lead discussions, can help to realize such virtues.

Administrators can also allocate funds to foster community building. For example, a college might encourage newly tenured faculty members to invite a few colleagues from other departments to a meal and celebration at the college's expense. Or faculty who receive teaching awards might be encouraged to invite a small number of students to a celebratory lunch at the college's expense. Or the college might reimburse faculty members who host students at their homes.

Funding can be released to support groups of faculty from diverse departments working together, for example, on topics of integrative scholarship across the disciplines, such as the environment or development, or community challenges, such as integrating academic and residential life or balancing career and family obligations. As an institution becomes larger or enhances its research profile, it will want to look for ways to foster meaningful dialogue across disciplines and to emphasize the ways in which the university is a communal and hospitable environment.

To the extent that reward structures signal values and priorities, colleges would do well to recognize teaching as they do research, and not only classroom teaching in one's discipline. Special prizes can be awarded for teaching in the liberal arts as well as for advising and informal mentoring, and service prizes can be given for building community.

Incentives can be designed to link academic and budgetary priorities. One could imagine course development grants for faculty who want to reconfigure a course around a meta-question, such as how discussion classes test and develop various virtues, or around a privileged concept, such as friendship.

In seeking to realize any academic vision, we need to be practical. Politics is the art of the possible. If our goal is not simply to articulate, but also to realize, an academic vision, we need to think not only of what should be but also of what is. The goal of politics is to bring the descriptive more into harmony with the normative level, and for that one needs to know both one's aspirations and the lay of the land, including what is possible. Not all faculty can stretch toward the vocational vision Mark advocates. One might start with those who can and try over time to widen the circle.

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Still Lonesome in Eden
The Continuing Challenge of the Academic Vocation
Susan VanZanten

In her characteristically gnomic fashion, Emily Dickinson describes those exiled from Eden as “The lonesome for they know not What—,” and it is precisely this uncanny loneliness that Mark Schwehn identifies in Exiles from Eden. For many in higher education, that lost Eden is the research university, the greenhouse that sends most of her children out to the far fields of the community college, the liberal arts college, or the comprehensive university. Only a few remain in Eden. We academics often mourn that loss, indulging in a conscious or an unconscious R-1 envy that manifests itself in a variety of ways. In his groundbreaking book, Mark identifies our common sense of loneliness but then reveals that the genuine Eden for which we actually long is a community of learners pursuing truth in love, humility, and friendship. The academic vocation, he argues, involves an attempt at cultivating a virtuous character, but the modern academic calling has instead privileged the making of knowledge. And when it comes to pedagogy, the American academy prioritizes transmitting knowledge and skills and assumes a clear distinction between intellectual and personal virtues.

Published in 1993, Mark’s account was one of the first to explore the historical and philosophical origins of this vocational loss. It was followed closely by George Marsden’s The Soul of the American University (1994), Douglas Sloan’s Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education (1994), and Bill Readings’s The University in Ruins (1996), each of which approached changes in the academy in slightly different ways. Few professors are immune to the disciplinary idolization of the Weberian Wissenschaft discussed in all of these accounts, even those, like me, who first entered the profession with a goal of becoming a teacher at a Christian liberal arts college. When one unexpectedly discovers an affinity for scholarship and one’s graduate mentors urge rejecting an offer of a position at a small Christian college in order to “hold out” for a R-1 position, it is difficult to remain faithful to one’s original vocation or to discern how to process competing demands. Although I took that original small college offer and then moved to a larger church-related teaching institution with greater support for scholarship, I continually struggled to maintain a clear perspective on the relationship of the two loves of my life: teaching and scholarship. I originally read Exiles from Eden in a faculty discussion group during my first year at Seattle Pacific University twenty years ago, and I remember my surge of guilty recognition when I read Mark’s dissection of the familiar academic lament, “I’ve been so busy this semester, I haven’t had enough time to do my own work.” In conversation with my colleagues, I found that many had the same conviction, and it was enlightening to explore why we felt that way and how our graduate education, our professional disciplines, and the rhetoric of American higher education had imperceptibly informed us. Many colleges and universities have used (and continue to use) Exiles from Eden to start similar campus conversations. The book thus has created circles of academic friends affirming vocational goals and
sharing vocational challenges, providing a salve for the wound that it diagnoses.

What Mark had identified personally, in terms of his own journey from the University of Chicago to Valparaiso, and theoretically, in his rich consideration of the history of ideas, in *Exiles from Eden*, he subsequently moved to address pragmatically in his vision for and leadership of programs supporting a concept of the academic vocation that focuses on forming students intellectually and ethically, emphasizing a community of learners, and acknowledging the contributions of spiritual virtues to teaching and scholarship. In 1991 the Lilly Fellows National Network was established under Mark’s watch to explore the relationship of Christianity to the academic vocation and to strengthen the religious character of church-related institutions of higher education. That network has grown to include nearly one hundred schools and provided the intellectual yeast for the Lilly Endowment’s Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV), a $218 million initiative that funded programs at eighty-eight church-related, liberal arts colleges and universities between 2000 and 2007 that gave students opportunities to explore the spiritual resources offered by the Christian tradition and to develop a sense of purpose in life—a vocation. The PTEV subsequently spun off in 2009 yet another undertaking: the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education, a national network sponsored by the Lilly Endowment and the Council of Independent Colleges to enrich the intellectual and theological exploration of vocation among undergraduate students. Currently, 178 institutions—all independent colleges but not necessarily church-related—are members. From the tiny acorn, a mighty oak has grown.

Meanwhile, the twenty-first century has seen a renewed emphasis among both public and private institutions on educating for civic responsibility, character formation, and spirituality. In 2005, the Association of American Colleges and Universities launched a decade-long initiative called “Liberal Education and America’s Promise” (LEAP), which includes an emphasis on teaching “the Big Questions,” instilling personal and social responsibility, and encouraging ethical reasoning and action. In 2010, UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) published *Cultivating the Spirit*, a book that draws on a seven-year study of the role that spirituality plays in student learning and development and that encourages institutions to give greater priority to students’ spiritual development. Despite such vocal naysayers as Stanley Fish (*Save the World on Your Own Time, 2008*), American college faculty have become increasingly committed to educating the whole person, cultivating wisdom as well as knowledge. According to the

*Exiles from Eden* has created circles of academic friends affirming vocational goals and sharing vocational challenges, providing a salve for the wound that it diagnoses.

2007–08 HERI Faculty Survey, the majority of college faculty (70.2 percent) now consider it “very important” or “essential” to “develop moral character,” an increase of 13.1 percent since the 2004–05 HERI Faculty Survey. Other increases in faculty support of students’ personal development as important goals for undergraduate education include efforts to “help students develop personal values” (66.1 percent, up 15.3 percent), “enhance students’ self-understanding” (71.8 percent, a 13.4 increase), and “provide for students’ emotional development” (48.1 percent, a 12.9 increase). So there are hopeful signs that the academic vocation is being reconsidered in ways that might lead us closer to the true Eden.

On the other hand, history cautions against millenarian expectations, and the intellectual work of *Exiles from Eden* remains sadly pertinent. While there are more national conversations connecting the religious and the academic vocation, along with a greater number of faculty committed to teaching and character formation, the structural and rhetorical forces
identified in *Exiles from Eden* remain powerful influences. Efforts to reform graduate education have had minimal success, and the continuing subliminal effects of the socialization process of the Weberian academy are still evident. While the Pew Foundation’s national Preparing Future Faculty program (1993–2003) attempted to transform graduate education to better prepare academics to work at a teaching institution rather than a research university, its results were mixed. To the extent that in some graduate programs

**Mark Schwehn’s call to re-appropriate certain religious values and traditional virtues, such as humility, faith, self-denial, charity, and friendship, is still apposite today.**

...more attention is paid to the role of teaching, the PFF had a limited success, but even that focus was narrowed to disciplinary pedagogical expertise. Most graduate schools today continue to turn out candidates for the Research University rather than the Reality University.

During the past three years in the Lilly Graduate Student Fellows Program, I have worked with sixteen graduate students pursuing advanced degrees at major research institutions across the country, and the majority attest to a continuing emphasis on scholarship and publication to the neglect of teaching in their graduate programs, while the idea of character formation is not even on the table. There is a strong disconnect (or “internal contradiction,” as Mark describes it in *Exiles*) between what college faculty identify as their goals and the training they receive. No wonder so many, even at church-related, teaching-focused institutions, try their best to get out of teaching, mentoring, and advising. At one student-centered institution that I know, efforts to implement individualized contracts failed when so many faculty wanted research-based contracts that there would not have been enough faculty left to teach the curriculum.

A second pernicious force identified in *Exiles from Eden* that continues to poison the academic vocation is the definition of excellence. We give lip-service to the idea of the unique niche of a teaching- or student-focused college or university, but we privately still idolize research. The following statement from *Exiles* is as true today as it was twenty years ago: “aspirations to higher levels of excellence among the vast majority of colleges and universities of all types are invariably linked to publication and research, that is, to becoming more like Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Chicago... [W]e might have a variety of conceptions of the academic vocation both in theory and in practice, but one conception—that of the academic as one who makes knowledge—has long since attained hegemony over all the others” (6). The opening of *Exiles from Eden* describes former Harvard President Derek Bok’s 1986–87 report on the failure of colleges to help students live ethical, fulfilling lives, and Bok’s most recent book, *Higher Education in America* (2013), continues to highlight problems with undergraduate education. He notes that universities are often more interested in projects that promote prestige rather than have pedagogical value and that too many adopt a research profile pursuing the conventional notion of what makes a university great. He laments students’ lack of progress in acquiring the intellectual skills of critical thinking, writing, problem analysis, and moral reasoning. He comments, “One looks in vain for serious faculty discussion of how to achieve such widely supported goals as increasing a capacity for self-directed learning, developing moral character or fostering creativity” (174).

While the rhetoric of most universities, colleges, professional organizations, and individual faculty avows that undergraduate education should prepare students to be morally responsible citizens, most are at a complete loss when it comes to knowing how to go about such education. Vague talk of spirituality, vocation,
moral reasoning, or values clarification, combined with perhaps one course in ethics, is not enough. Mark's call to re-appropriate certain religious values and traditional virtues, such as humility, faith, self-denial, charity, and friendship, is still apposite today. And these virtues, as he notes, float into the ether without communal anchoring in religious traditions. My experience as a LFP graduate mentor has revealed how the bond of friendship moored in the Christian religious tradition can facilitate profound consideration of the ways in which humility, faith, and charity can sustain and enrich our teaching and our scholarship. Through readings and discussions, our community of graduate students and mentors has wrestled with the paradox of cultivating intellectual humility and a willingness to listen to others while meeting the professional expectation of assertive competence and the practice of stressing one's own unique discoveries and interpretations. We have talked about how to exercise charity to texts and theories, not automatically resorting to a hermeneutic of suspicion, but also how to extend such charity to the students in our classrooms without lessening our expectations for their learning. We have considered how our responsibility to our students includes their ethical and moral growth and how we might tactfully and gently promote such growth. We have become a community "where the pleasures of friendship and the rigors of work are united" (Exiles, 61).

However, the combination of such pleasures and rigors will be hard to sustain as these graduate students eventually take academic positions. In my own experience in church-related higher education at four institutions, I have found what I believe to be the best setting for such efforts, but I have also wrestled with the continuing challenges to attaining these goals. The need for faculty and administration to work together to pursue a religiously informed academic vocation is constantly tested by the deep-seated individualism instilled by our professional disciplinary training and our national cultural ethos. Within today's conversations about MOOCs, the increasing cost of college education, and the new federal scorecard system, Mark's prophetic voice continues to need to be heard.

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Works Cited


A Way to Live
Reflections on Dorothy Bass’s Contributions to the
Practice of Christian Faith and Life
Craig Dykstra

“How can, and how do, our lives and our life together participate in a way of life that reflects the Life of God, both when we are gathered as church and when we are dispersed into countless disparate circumstances? What is the shape of a contemporary way of life that truly is life-giving in and for the sake of the world? And how can the church foster such a way of life, for the good of all creation?”

Dorothy Bass
“Ways of Life Abundant”

Dorothy Bass poses these three questions early on in her marvelous essay, “Ways of Life Abundant,” which launches the book she and I edited together, For Life Abundant. They are rich and wonderful questions. They are life-shaping questions. They are questions that, when pursued deeply and well, can indeed lead us into lives that matter, lives of profound depth and meaning, lives of gracious and effective service, lives of true faith. And they are the questions that have framed and shaped the substance of Dorothy’s life and work.

Dorothy has not only posed these questions. She has lived them. And in her living, she has opened up ways to enable thousands of others to live them too. She is an exquisitely lucid and compelling writer and a superb editor. She is an extraordinary teacher. As a mentor, she is beloved, especially by young scholar-teachers and pastors who are finding their way into their vocations. And over the years, she has created and gathered with consummate hospitality communities of thought and practice whom she has enabled to explore what it means to live the Christian life faithfully and well. In and through her own faithful life and presence, Dorothy has fostered and guided thousands of individual persons and whole communities of faith throughout this country as they have sought to live a way of life together that truly is life-giving, in response to the love of God, for the sake of the world.

The three big questions Dorothy has posed cannot be answered in the abstract. They can only be answered in the context of practice, by practicing the life of faith together, over time, in community with specific people, in specific places, times and circumstances. It is a mark of the integrity with which Dorothy has undertaken her work and lived her life that she has lived that way while helping so many to do so as well.

I have known and worked closely with Dorothy for twenty-five years. We have enjoyed a wonderful collaboration and a valued friendship. It all began shortly after I arrived at the Lilly Endowment. Dorothy had long been a key advisor to my predecessor, Robert Wood Lynn. As a consultant, she helped him in myriad ways to shape and conduct the Religion Division’s grant-making program. She knew the players and the programs, and she understood how the Endowment worked. I, on the other hand, was new to the scene, so Dorothy was a godsend. In the early days, she was extraordinarily helpful in guiding me through and helping me to advance the many projects the Endowment was funding, particularly in the areas of congregational studies and the study of American Mainline Protestantism, work in which, as an historian, she was an active schol-
Early on we recognized that we also shared a deep common interest in the fundamental question of how the church historically has and, more urgently, can today enable people to enter into and be educated and formed in the life of Christian faith. Thus began between us a sustained conversation that continues still today and through which we have found with one another an intellectual and vocational kinship.

Our conversations soon gave rise to the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith. Launched in 1990, it is just now coming to completion. The Project was created in the first place to take up and explore in great depth the three questions quoted at the beginning of these reflections. The whole body of work has been grounded in a few basic convictions that are expressed in the titles of two of the key books that emerged from the Project.

The title of one of them, *For Life Abundant*, states the point and purpose of the whole enterprise. It identifies a telos that is rooted in a core theological conviction; namely, that the great good news is that God is love and the giver of life. The gift of life is given by God in creation and is restored and renewed for all humanity in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. "In the beginning was the Word," says the Gospel of John, "and the Word was with God and the Word was God," and through the Word "all things came into being." And "what has come into being through him was life" (John 1:1–4). "I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly," says Jesus (John 10:10). The testimony of all of Scripture and of the whole history of the church is that there truly is a way of life; indeed, a way of life abundant. The call to each of us—as persons and as communities of faith—is to recognize and receive that gift, to respond to it gratefully, and to share and participate in that way of life with everyone, so that, as the Apostle Paul says, they (and we) may "take hold of the life that really is life" (1 Tim. 6:19). That, we believe, is our most fundamental privilege and vocation as human beings, for each of us personally and for all of us together in community with one another. Hence, "For Life Abundant."

The title of the other key book is *Practicing Our Faith*. This phrase signals the conviction that we live into and participate in the way of life abundant that God both promises and provides by practicing it. The word "practicing" here has at least two meanings. We "practice" in the sense of trying it out, learning how to do it, becoming more competent in it as our practicing makes us more skilled and thoughtful in what we are doing. We also "practice" in the sense that we become practitioners, often of something that becomes so central to our lives that it shapes the very core of our personal identity and vocation.

Further, Christian practices are necessarily communal practices. We practice our faith, a shared faith, not just an individual faith. As Dorothy has written, "This after all is a basic tenet of Christian faith and life: through Christ, we belong to God and become brothers and sisters to one another, sharing Christ's love for all people. Christians know we are not made to be alone" (Dykstra and Bass 2010, 4–5). Thus "Christian practices" are described in *Practicing Our Faith* as "things Christian people do together over time in response to and in the light of God's active presence for the life of the world" (Ibid., 5).

Over the centuries and around the world still today, tremendously diverse Christian communities have discerned, explored the contours of, and practiced certain fundamental practices that are constitutive of that abundant way of life. In so doing, the church, in spite of and partly through its often flawed and stumbling efforts, has gathered wisdom and skill that is of inestimable value to us today. The task for us as educators in faith—as pastors and teachers, guides and companions—is to discern and assess the shape of our contemporary practice of faith, draw as deeply as

(continued on page 33)
In Mark and Dorothy's home, Biblical stories weren't just read stoically from a slightly disheveled Bible. The stories were in the art on the walls, in the picture books that filled the shelves, in the ark that decorated the mantle. The stories weren't just disembodied air. They were lamb figurines you could hold in your hand and swaddled babies you could throw at a sibling. My desire to write from the perspective of Biblical characters came, I think, from not just hearing the stories but from wanting to live inside them.

This emphasis on incarnation was also realized during my Valparaiso childhood summers when, from the ages of nine to sixteen, I participated in the Young Actors Shakespeare Workshop. Together with twenty-five other youngsters and under the guidance of John Steven Paul, I spent the hot days of July mouthing the words of Malvolio or Puck, penciling verbs beside speeches, trying to keep my cotton t-shirt from sticking to the back of the wooden chairs in DeMotte Hall. I was learning the great rhythms of the English language, but I was also learning empathy: what kind of desperation led Lady Macbeth to push her husband into murder? Why would Mercutio make jokes while he died? Why did Leonato's love for his dishonored daughter look so much like rage?

My father and Dorothy offered me the assurance that Biblical stories were permeable, that we could enter into them. And they taught me that the stories were strong enough to hold whatever voices or questions I found inside.

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“Tanka As Ruth” was first published in The Literary Review in Spring 2006.

“Tanka As Ark” was first published in A Sing Economy, an anthology from Flim Forum Press, in 2007.
AS JACOB

I walk between two mules, the backs of the mules at my waist. One mule has emerald eyes and the other, amethyst. I am a big man, guiding the mules with the weight of my palms the way I guide my weight into Leah by lifting her up and toward me.

I am to deliver the mules and I am to return home. Yesterday, Rachel gave birth to a dead one. They stopped her body up with moss and gave his body to me.

I took him away from her and into the woods and with poplar branches with almond and sycamore I beat him until he bled until I made the way he died.

In a sack around the neck of the emerald mule is his body. The mule knows the way to go by the hanging smell.

When I return home Rachel’s hands will hang at her sides. Her sister will come to me to be of use.
I am here among the corn.
Beer for an ear? I say to passersby. Naomi's right eye shuts with fever. The corn adds her. I am foreign and will tell you this corn is off putting as a shell without sea sound. You go out into the field and think you're deaf. Ear for a beer, I say, get me out of this fix. Naomi's left eye rolls up, green pus lines the bottom. When she smiles. Naomi's knees. We have no men. We get nothing in this story. Let me tell you. The pull of lashes on Naomi's right eye trying to open to a God who left us makes me love no one but Naomi, the birds dip into this green mess. It is no ocean.
Sick of ointment, sack, and path. 
Sick of the backwater of my husband's mouth. 
The room is three stale mattresses 
pushed together to raise the price. 

Now the sheets are wet with blood. 
Joseph says my face is pale. A car 
beeps by outside. The wet world sits 
on my empty body then peels 
back wailing. A car beeps by. 

Joseph returns with pineapple juice, 
fingerprints staining the glass. 
A long dark hair wiggles in 
the orange light at his collar. 
*Your face looks pale,* he says. 

The afterbirth is in a plastic 
Turquoise bucket. I reel my 
body up and over to a hole 
to squat. 

And no one comes. No animals or stars. 
I pull my hands up into my sleeves 
and touch my face. 

I go to the window and run my finger 
over a dust coated slat and still 
no one comes. 

This time, I pull Him to my breast, 
He lives. Day bellows in me. 

I go and kneel and ripen.
TANKA AS ARK

Tongue lolling,  
the llama lounges in her thigh.  
She repeats words the llama likes:  
*rickshaw, Sudan, task, muskwort, llama.*

Where her wrist veins cross  
a dove's eye opens.

A sherry-dipped slug at every joint, hawk  
feathers in her blisters, snake spine chinned, kiss  
of rooster in her cough, rodent body  
rippling through jaw.

Seahorses curl at her temples.

Squinting through a seaweed ruckus, the otters  
in her calves, sleek in motion, quicken toward  
the bullfrogs in her thighs,  
hiccupped throats turned inward.

Sometimes she breaks leaves in the gutter  
until the menagerie is quiet.  
Until the distance thickens.

The Mourning Cloak is a butterfly  
inside her heart and it is dead.  
Its scales shine.  
One antennae doubled over by the wind.  
White sunk along the lower wing.  
The other animals do not bother it.  
To have a dead thing in the heart is sacred.  
*Come, let's have the tongs and bones.*

The sun is the mouth of a jar  
and inside the jar is a lion.
possible on the deep veins of wisdom of our tradition (as well as from our contemporaries across the street and around the world) and engage ourselves, our children, our young people, and our neighbors in communities of wise, shared practice of a way of life abundant.

Practicing Our Faith is an effort to help in that regard. It describes twelve Christian practices that are fundamental to and constitutive of a Christian way of life abundant. The book contains a chapter on each of them, and you can glean from these essays good, strong clues about where the tradition's wisdom may be found, what its practice has been, and what it will mean to engage in each practice in our time and circumstances. But it is Dorothy's own book, Receiving the Day (2000), that set the standard and created the template for rendering a practice in breadth and in depth, and doing so in such a way that the best, deep wisdom and practice available in the faith tradition can be appropriated afresh in our own contemporary cultural and social circumstances.

Building on that early work, Dorothy and her colleagues in The Valparaiso Project then set out to produce what has become a vast array of resources to help communities of faith do exactly this. Many of those resources have been produced by communities of Christian practice. A community of scholars and pastors wrote Practicing Our Faith. A group of teachers and pastors created a community of Christian practice with their own adolescent offspring and with other young people to whom they were close, and Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens (Bass and Richter 2002) was composed by that community. Dorothy's three chapters in that book were written with her then-fifteen-year-old daughter and son, Martha and John. A community of young adult theologians and pastors put together On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life (Bass and Briehl 2010), which seeks to encourage and help other young adults embrace a way of life abundant.

In every case, these were not just groups of authors. They were communities of faith who gathered over extended periods of time to worship, read, study, share one another's stories and life experience and practice their faith together in a way that enabled them to speak, write, teach and help faithfully and authentically. In addition, more than 150 grants were made to help a wide variety of specific existing communities of faith (including congregations, colleges and universities, church camps, retreat and conference centers, intentional-living communities, and social service agencies) use the Project's published resources to reflect on and experiment with new ways of building up and reinvigorating Christian practices that are central to their own identities and ministries.²

For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry builds on all the previous work on Christian practices, but then asks what all this means for theological education and Christian ministry. To that end, a community of theological educators and pastors of congregations was brought into being to explore these matters together in relation to their own lives and ministries. Meeting over the course of nearly five years, this community of pastors and theological educators hammered out fresh understandings of the ultimate and shared aims and purposes of theological education and Christian ministry. It proposed and fostered ways to overcome some of the disciplinary isolation among various fields and departments that plagues theological schools. It incubated new experiments in theological teaching that involve scholars and pastors working together. Several new PhD programs have come into being in the last decade or so. These, together with other programs that have been significantly reconceived, are playing crucial roles in educating the next generation of theological educators. Both the fundamental purposes and the pedagogical shape of these doctoral programs have been heavily influenced by For Life Abundant, and a number of the members of the community that wrote this book have played crucial roles in shaping and leading them. As a result, and aided and abetted by Dorothy's own continuing efforts, the community continues to expand and now involves an increasing number of theological seminaries and a whole new generation of theological educators and pastoral leaders.
Dorothy Bass lives a way of life that truly is life-giving. This is her astonishing gift to all of us. She embodies so profoundly in her way of living and working the practice of Christian faith that new and expanded communities of faith have come into being and long-standing ones are significantly refreshed and renewed. She has helped us to see more clearly how our lives and our life together can participate in a way of life that reflects the presence of God. And she has helped us to learn how the church in all its parts can more faithfully foster such a way of life for the good of all creation. For all of this, we are deeply grateful.

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Notes

1. These resources include five other books that provide in-depth descriptions of the practices described in Practicing Our Faith. Other books explore how multiple practices intersect in the life of particular contexts and communities of faith. Still others take on broader issues regarding education and formation in faith, and Christian faith and life. You can find these books and many other resources, including study guides, course syllabi, and individual articles, essays and public presentations, at the Project’s website: practicingourfaith.org.

2. Extensive reports on each of these grant projects are available at the website under “Resources.”

Works Cited


IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO OVERESTIMATE Dorothy Bass's influence on contemporary American Protestant spirituality. Enlarging the focus beyond individual spiritual formation alone, her groundbreaking *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (Jossey-Bass, 1997) invited us to consider Christianity's social practices, the embodied things Christians do with and for one another, over time, in response to God, in order to address human yearnings and needs. Her work opened, and continues to open, new avenues for exploring Christian education and formation, theological education, the relationship between theory and practice, and the family resemblances among religions.

In collaboration with her colleague, Craig Dykstra of Lilly Endowment, Inc., Dorothy led the way in excavating the long history of Christian social practices and asking how we might marshal the resources of that history for contemporary life. Thinking with the work of scholars like Alasdair MacIntyre and Pierre Bourdieu, Dorothy and Craig pondered what the notion of Christian social practices might offer to people longing for "patterns of shared life" that are "richer and deeper than [those] offered by the wider culture" (*POF*, x). Rather than focusing solely on the cultivation of each individual Christian's spiritual life, Dorothy and Craig sought to cultivate a richer social life, to think about "what Christian faith has to do with our work, with friendship and marriage, with the way we raise our children, with public and political life, with how we spend our money" (*x*).

Their method was not a method of application in which they would "apply" the doctrines and truth claims of Christianity to daily social living. They deliberately did not begin their work at either end of the theory/practice divide that has so often stunted modern theological education and scholarship. Indeed, if that divide is not as fiercely defended in this century as it was in the last, we have Dorothy and Craig, in part, to thank. They began instead with the assumption that the histories, theologies, and practices of Christianity have not developed separately, but together, over time. For Dorothy and Craig, Christianity was not just a set of truth claims; it was "an ancient, global and still developing tradition" that bears within it wisdom about what it means to be human, wisdom about ways of living that respond to God's presence in and for the world.

I was lucky enough to encounter Dorothy and her project on Christian practices at the very beginning of my career. As a post-doctoral Lilly Fellow at Valparaiso University, I was assigned Dorothy as my mentor and graciously invited into her work. Dorothy and Craig had recently assembled a group of outstanding scholars—people like M. Shawn Copeland and L. Gregory Jones, Don E. Saliers, and Amy Plantinga Pauw, people whose books I had read and admired—to excavate together some of the social practices that they believed were key to "a way of life that is whole, and touched by the presence of God" (*x*). This group of scholars had identified patterns of life like hospitality, testimony, keeping Sabbath, forgiveness, dying well, and singing together as Christian practices that addressed fundamental human needs. These well-known theologians, ministers, historians, and educators planned...
to write a book together, mining the wisdom of Christian practices for how we might live together more justly, more attentively, and more joyfully in our own day.

After the group had met a few times, they decided that they needed a chapter on the practice of "honoring the body." Although I was not present for those discussions, I can imagine how they went. Every practice the group planned to write about was an embodied practice. Indeed, embodiment was a hallmark of the kind of Christian practice Dorothy and her colleagues sought to describe. Christian social practices are intended to meet embodied human needs: the need for a place to rest and food to eat calls forth practices of hospitality; the desire to exhale one's breath in praise calls forth the practice of singing; the need for reconciliation between embodied human beings calls forth the practice of forgiveness. The body will be present in every chapter, I can imagine them arguing. Why have a chapter on the body alone?

It is precisely because practices can be done well or badly and possess both the power to heal and the power to harm that the group decided, in the end, to add a chapter on honoring the body to their book. Christianity has an ambiguous legacy with regard to the body: is it a blessing or a site where religious rules are tested? A gift from God or a problem God asks us to solve? A part of the essence of who we are, or a shell, as Plato once put it, within which the soul is trapped? Christian answers to these questions have not always honored the body, and the effects of those answers reverberate through the ages.

 Offering me the opportunity of a lifetime, Dorothy invited me to write the chapter on the Christian practice of honoring the body. I remember that I was slow to catch on. "The Christian practice of honoring the body?" I asked. "Is there such a thing?"

"Well," Dorothy replied, "surely a faith that has creation, incarnation, and resurrection at its heart has some ways of honoring the body."

Through Dorothy’s generosity, I found myself in one of the most exciting and creative collaborations I have ever experienced. Was there a Christian practice of honoring the body? Certainly. But it was not lying on the surface of Christian history like a stone in road. It was obscured by hierarchical understandings of the human person, by misogyny, by fear of the power of sexual desire. It had to be excavated, sought in unexpected places, argued for. But so did all the practices. All of us, accomplished theologians and novice writers alike, were engaged in work that was both descriptive and creative, both theoretical and practical, both historical and constructive. For specialists trained in particular methodologies and fields, it was not always easy to work at these intersections without choosing one perspective over the other. But refusing to adhere to the theory/practice dichotomy freed us to think more expansively about the relationship of our scholarship to the way we live our lives. And that was thrilling, joyful work. Sitting around the table with those dedicated people, talking about the most ordinary human experiences in the most extraordinary way, I felt the world opening up.

With Practicing Our Faith, Dorothy invited us into an alternative scholarly space within which we were encouraged to ask why what we studied mattered to us and why it might matter to others.

With Practicing Our Faith, Dorothy Bass invited us into an alternative scholarly space within which we were encouraged to ask why what we studied mattered to us and why it might matter to others.
Nor did they hold back their own human longings and frustrations, their questions about how to live life with integrity, questions we all worried over, questions that inspired our work. They aspired to help themselves and their readers to cultivate “a way of life that is informed by the wisdom of the Christian tradition, alert to the needs of our time, and responsive to the gracious presence and startling promises of God” (12). This ambitious goal required every resource they could get their hands on.

For scholars accustomed to working within a particular field and its methodologies, the work into which Dorothy invited us was both challenging and liberating. It required us not only to study and try to understand the long history of Christian practices, but to see ourselves as actors within that history, receiving the wisdom contained in those practices from our ancestors, trying to make that wisdom come alive in our own lives and the lives of our families and communities, and developing ways of passing it on.

If the way of thinking and writing Dorothy commended was inviting, the way of being religious her project imagined was even more so. I can remember Sharon Parks helping me with my essay by saying: “Offer your readers one small, doable step to take that will make it possible for them to take the next step.” This was the spirit of Practicing Our Faith. “You join by jumping in where you are” (7), Dorothy and Craig wrote in their introduction. “Start where you can” (10).

The whole spectrum of Christian practices did not have to be embraced before you could get started. Did the practice of forgiveness seem out of reach? Don’t start there, then. Start with something that feels doable. Do you like to sing? Lift your voice in song with a congregation once a week. Are you concerned about the crisis of hospitality in our society and perhaps in your own life? Choose a small way of making a beginning: invite a friend for a simple supper at your table or help serve a meal in a soup kitchen. Feeling like work has taken over your life? Refrain with a few others from working and spending for one day a week and see what happens. The practices are web-like, Dorothy insisted. Begin with a song or a meal or a rest and eventually you will come around to the practice of forgiveness. Every practice leads to every other. But rather than moving through developmental stages in a linear fashion, the practices invite us to start anywhere and branch out from there in any direction. They have an experimental, improvisational quality. What they will mean in our lives and the lives of our communities cannot be predicted in advance. We have to practice them in order to find out.

Sabbath keeping was the practice Dorothy explored for Practicing Our Faith and for Receiving the Day, her book-length treatment of Christian practices that involve the structuring of time. She began to be drawn to this practice when she noticed how easily she and her friends trespassed the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy through refraining from work. They regularly complained to each other—the academic’s time-honored form of bragging—about how much work they would have to bring home over the weekend, how much of their Sundays would be taken up by grading papers and preparing lectures.

As Dorothy began experimenting with refraining from work one day a week, she found that Sabbath keeping not only offered rest for the overworked; she found that keeping the Sabbath holy illuminated God’s most radical claims on our life together. The practice of Sabbath keeping teaches us that only free people can take a day off. Therefore, the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy is God’s enduring testimony against slavery. Keeping Sabbath is deeply intertwined with the practice of saying “yes” and saying “no”: yes to giving oneself to joyful worship and fellowship, no to our capitalist economy’s pressure to make and spend. Keeping Sabbath reminds us that the arrangement of time is political: “how time is structured,” Dorothy notes, “makes someone’s life easier and someone’s harder” (83). Good Sabbaths have the potential to do more than make good Christians, Dorothy concluded. Good Sabbaths have the potential to make good societies, in which no one has too much work and no one has too little. This weekly festival, this “spring of souls” (87) makes a claim on us that goes far beyond the boundaries of our own lives.
Dorothy’s work on Christian practices has had far-reaching consequences, not only for Christian spirituality but also for theological education. The vision she offers in Practicing Our Faith gives students preparing for ministry an integrated way of approaching their studies in both the classroom and the field, and it offers faculty an integrated way of thinking about their own classes and the theological curriculum as a whole. Practices provide a point of intersection between what has often been divided into the “practical” and the “theoretical,” illuminating how theology, history, belief, and the embodied acts of human beings and their communities all impinge on one another, shaping and critiquing and extending one another.

The future of Dorothy’s work in Christian practices may lie in multi-religious theological education, interreligious dialogue, and comparative theological scholarship. A focus on practices illuminates the family resemblances among religions, as Dorothy’s own work on Sabbath keeping so beautifully shows. Practices emerge in response to deeply felt human needs, needs we all share by virtue of being human. What would a list of core social practices look like for Islam, for Judaism, for Buddhism? Where would each list overlap with the list in Practicing Our Faith and the lists emerging from other traditions? Where would the lists diverge? Where are the family resemblances among different religions’ social practices most vivid and where are they most obscure? What do we learn from the differences and similarities about how to shape a rich and flourishing life together?

At the end of the twentieth century, Dorothy Bass invited us to jump in where we are, to experiment with the practices that address our yearnings for a meaningful life together, a life in which there is room for us to offer and receive hospitality, to work and to rest, to praise and lament, to respond to the needs of others, to cherish and protect creation, and to grow in our awareness of the living presence of God. Nearly twenty years later, as we move deeper into another century, the needs Dorothy’s work addressed are as urgent as ever, and the work Dorothy has done and invited others to do continues to hold out the possibility that we can practice our way into patterns of living that are good for us and for the world.

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On the Road
A Gift for Inviting People into Practices

Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore

"How is it that great religious traditions... are borne into the future by such small and culturally restricted... institutions as the majority of American congregations appear to be?" (Bass 1994, 171). So begins a quest that launched a rich vocational trajectory. This question, posed by Dorothy Bass—historian, practical theologian, and companion sojourner in the Christian faith—is tucked away in Volume Two of a study on American congregations supported by the Lilly Endowment. Even if less widely known than her other writings, her chapter on "Congregations and the Bearing of Traditions" marks a major turning point in her work, the moment when her dissatisfaction with conventional historian-type questions of change and continuity blossomed into a deeper desire to understand how scriptural traditions, and the "transcendental realities" they bear, live on in people's lives (181). The answer, stated simply: these traditions live on by inviting individuals and families into practices intrinsic to them.

This conviction about the centrality of practices invigorated conversation between Dorothy and Craig Dykstra, then vice-president of the Lilly Endowment's Religion Division, and also invested in renewing Christian practices as a way to enhance theological education. Together they set out to elucidate practices not only so that people could revitalize them—a primary aim—but also so that scholars, teachers, and ministers could enrich their understanding and thus contribute to sustaining them. The rest is history. And a rich history of interchange and publication it is.

Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People, which Dorothy edited and published a few years later, was a game changer for both church and academy. In the church, its influence can be measured easily by numbers and lives affected. One account of the book's impact describes it as traveling "nonstop through church circles for the last 12 years, read and used by clergy, laypeople, denominational leaders, seminarians and others" (Winston 2009). By 2009, it had sold 100,000 copies, making it one of Jossey-Bass's most successful books.

In a way, the book simply rode the wave of a change already occurring in the academy around practices and religion. Although Dorothy credits philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in her 1994 essay with the idea that "social embodiment is essential to the bearing of living traditions," a growing number of scholars from a variety of different angles besides Aristotelian ethics were challenging the "notion that traditions are principally borne by texts" (180) or by belief statements and doctrinal debate. Practical theologians and scholars in religion in general already had begun to pay greater attention to the local, the material, and the embodied as constitutive of theology and faith.

In another sense, however, Practicing Our Faith both capitalized on this shift and contributed greatly to its development by giving the idea of practices conceptual depth and concrete illustration, and by spreading the word beyond the academy to communities where people strive to live out their faith. As worship scholar John Witvliet says, the book "sparked a small movement, a whole way of thinking [that] crystallized the insight that the Christian faith is...
not just a set of cognitive beliefs, but a way of life” (quoted in Winston 2009).

The important conceptual moves found in Practicing Our Faith ensured its widespread impact. In a co-written introductory chapter, Dorothy and Craig offer a definition of Christian practices clear and expansive enough to undergird a multitude of future consultations, projects, and publications. In their distillation, Christian practices are “things Christian people do together over time in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world” (1997, 5; their emphasis). Each phrase in this pithy sentence captures elements they deem essential—community, history, and the ultimate aim of God’s care for the wider world. Each element disrupts popular New Age perceptions of spirituality as something that floats free of its context and the pursuit of wider human and divine goods. Christian practices are related to basic needs shared by all human beings, not activities unique to Christianity or spirituality. All such practices have a history deeply intertwined with religious traditions. They require and are deeply embedded in community. They are practices we do together. We need companions. Finally, they are guided by aims that reach beyond individual self-improvement. It is not all about “me.”

As this suggests, Practicing Our Faith expands our imagination about what counts as a Christian practice. It suggests daily activities we normally overlook as vital sites for faith, such as organizing our time, spending our money, making decisions, attending to our bodies, and forgiving each other. Indeed, “our daily lives are all tangled up with the things God is doing in the world” (1997, 8; their emphasis). These everyday practices stand in intricate relationship, as broth to consommé, to formal practices we usually identify as “religious,” such as praying, reading scripture, and going to worship. The more official acts, prescribed and performed within congregations, distill the heart of belief and are central to Christian life. But we see now how these “darker and richer” (1997, 9) instances of faith must flow into our daily lives and shape our everyday activities in order to sustain Christian faith.

Practicing Our Faith also expands our imagination about how people might go about engaging in such practice. In fact, Dorothy has centered her efforts on finding ways to help people breathe new life into these practices. This does not mean developing anything like a twelve-step guide to spiritual enlightenment. Rather, Dorothy and Craig invite people and communities to do their own thinking and talking about how they are “already participating in each practice” in their life together (2010, 211). In the second edition, they guide their readership through the same series of questions that contributors considered in composing their chapters, inviting people to consider how a practice’s history and scriptural context shape it and how it might be restored today. If Christian belief involves a “way to live,” then its many practices are interrelated and abundant. One can start anywhere, with practices one already enjoys or performs well with the assurance that “focusing on even a single practice,” such as keeping the Sabbath or practicing hospitality, “can lead you into a new way of life. Get started with one and you find yourself in the middle of another” (1997, 11).

Given the potential fruitfulness of faith practices, it should come as no surprise that Practicing Our Faith spawned an assortment of companion volumes, opening up to ever-widening communities. Indeed, in trying to capture its significance I am struck by the sheer abundance of creative output. I almost don’t know where to stop my account. In Dorothy’s leadership of the Valparaiso Project on the Education and...
Formation of People in Faith, a Lilly Endowment program based at Valparaiso University, she mentored, guided, cajoled, nurtured, and sparked a plethora of other projects. She gathered people, led them in discussion, and organized their writing together. To have convened successfully so many diverse groups, drawing out each person’s best effort and eventuating in collegial co-authorship, is no mean accomplishment. Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens (2002), which Dorothy edited with Don Richter, breaks down the practices into themes that teens confront on a regular basis—stuff, food, work, play, time, friends, justice, prayer, and so on. Adults and teens join together to write each chapter, exemplifying in method the value of working in community. On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life (2010), edited with Susan Briehl, reaches out to young adults who teeter on the edge of bigger commitments of work and love, a critical time for faith formation.

These volumes are only two of the many Dorothy either directly sponsored through the Valparaiso Project or indirectly influenced. The front matter of the second edition of Practicing Our Faith lists several books in which individual authors develop one of its twelve practices into full-fledged books, such as Dorothy’s own Receiving the Day (1999), a beautiful meditation on the day, the week, the year, and how the flow of liturgical time stands in relationship to and over against regular time. And the twelve practices covered in the book do not exhaust the possibilities. The project also supported books that address new practices, such as caring for children (Miller-McLemore 2006) and prayer (Wolfteich 2006). In recent years, look-alike books with gerunds as titles have appeared, reflecting at least the indirect, if not immediate, influence of Practicing Our Faith (e.g., a book series on Christian Explorations of Daily Living, with volumes on working, playing, eating, shopping, etc.).

Dorothy and Craig also considered the theoretical infrastructure behind their labor and invited groups to explore how academic theology, faith, and practice evolve together to shape a Christian way of life. Dorothy convened a group of systematic theologians, producing along with co-editor Miroslav Volf Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life (2002). A few years later, she and Craig invited practical theologians, ministers, and scholars from other disciplines to consider the role of practical theology, leading to publication of For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry (2008). Currently she is working with four colleagues on a book, Christian Practical Wisdom: What It Is, Why It Matters (forthcoming 2015), that explores the kind of knowledge distinct to practice.

Although some people might place Dorothy’s academic theology within the MacIntyre tradition of virtue ethics, this does not do full justice to the range of her commitments nor to her own Christian formation. East Coast education, feminist leanings, and progressive politics do not completely align with a communitarian position that sometimes sets faith and culture in opposition. Instead she remains deeply invested in the relationship between Christian communities and the wider public, and in how the former must make a difference as a key player within the latter.

If I have learned anything from Dorothy, it is that people are so much more together than any one of us would ever be on our own. This may sound simple, but I mean this precisely as it pertains to her primary commitment to the living out of Christian faith in the day-to-day world. My life is so much more because of her friendship, love, and collegiality for nearly thirty years. But I am far from the only beneficiary. She has fostered abundant life for a host of people and communities, a blessing that will live well into the future not only through her family and wonderful children (who exemplify so much of what she values and whom I regard with awe and appreciation), but also through her writing and the many writings she has inspired.

In the late 1980s, Dorothy and I had semi-nary offices next door to one another. From the oasis of our sporadic sack lunches together years ago, squeezed into days otherwise overflowing with teaching and parenting young children, to our long distant friendship today renewed through unhurried dinners while on study
retreat in northern Minneapolis, I have been on the road walking side-by-side with Dorothy for a long time. On occasion—the type of occasion I believe many others have shared because of her presence—our hearts have burned within us only to notice that Christ has been walking with us. Since our secular age makes such moments ever harder to grasp and proclaim, we cannot fully measure—not by books sold nor by flowery tributes composed—her many gifts. We can simply express immense gratitude for her good company in seeing life anew along the way.

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Works Cited


Three Languages for Living
A Life That Matters

Dan P. McAdams

When Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass asked me if they might include the opening chapter from my book, The Redemptive Self, in a compendium of readings they were assembling on how to live a good and worthwhile life, I was beyond thrilled. When I received my copy of Leading Lives That Matter, I quickly turned to the section containing my contribution, to make sure they spelled my name right and to read their commentary on what I had written. Once I determined that I was happy with all of that, I tried to relieve the guilt I was feeling regarding my self-preoccupation, so I quickly surveyed the rest of their 545-page book. With readings from over sixty different sources, ranging from The Iliad to Ben Affleck, the collection looked spectacular. I read a few short selections (William James, Charles Taylor) that seemed most germane to my own research interests (the topic of human identity). Then I put the volume away, figuring I would pull it off the shelf again when I had more time to savor the contents.

Predictably, the book collected dust in my home office for over five years, despite the fact that my wife (Rebecca Pallmeyer) and I spent many wonderful afternoons and evenings with Mark and Dorothy during those years, either when they came to Chicago for a play or dinner, or when we returned to Valpo for Christ College events. The topic of Leading Lives came up occasionally, which forced me to fake my way through conversations as if I had read the whole thing. Finally, I did pick the book up again. Asked to write a short chapter for a professional volume on the topic of identity in the college years, I reasoned that Leading Lives might give me some good material. Surely, Aristotle had something to say about identity!

Well, 545 pages (and one week) later, I staggered back to my writing task, now overwhelmed by the book’s intellectual riches. The sections by Aristotle were great. Tolstoy’s Death of Ivan Ilych was the perfect finishing touch. But for me, the best parts were written by Mark and Dorothy themselves, as they framed the key issues addressed by the many different authors and posed provocative questions. I felt I was back in class, transported to Christ College circa 1975, when Rebecca and I were blessed to learn from such master teachers as Warren Rubel and Bill Olmsted. And now I had to write a paper for the course! Yet in this case, the paper assignment—my chapter on student identity—was about something I have been studying as a research psychologist for over thirty years.

I am both humbled and grateful that Mark and Dorothy gave me sparkling new insights and a fresh perspective for the chapter I was writing. To be more specific, they suggested three different languages for the construction of identity. In an integrative tour de force, Mark and Dorothy explained how contemporary young people who want to lead a life of purpose and significance may draw upon three different languages of identity to make sense of their lives. Revealed in classic texts and in contemporary fiction, film, and philosophy, these are the languages of authenticity, virtue, and vocation. The psychological researchers and theorists whom I customarily read often touch upon these ideas in their discussions of...
identity, but nobody has delineated it all as clearly and as persuasively as Mark and Dorothy have.

**What Is Identity?**

In everyday psychological parlance, identity refers to who a person is or who a person (reflexively) thinks he or she is. Social psychologists emphasize that one's identity consists largely of social roles and group affiliations, and the beliefs and traits we associate with those roles and affiliations. I am a father, husband, professor of psychology, and Cubs fan, among other things, and all of these roles and affiliations feed into my overall identity.

Beginning with Erik Erikson and other mid-century theorists, however, certain psychologists have raised the bar when it comes to defining identity. Erikson acknowledged that young children have a primitive understanding of themselves in terms of roles and affiliations, but he insisted that a full sense of identity does not emerge until much later, adolescence at the earliest, when the person organizes the various self-relevant roles, affiliations, traits, beliefs, skills, and habits into a *psychosocial pattern*. The pattern or configuration that Erikson had in mind productively positions the person within the adult world while providing life with a deep sense of *inner sameness and continuity*. As Erikson saw it, identity is something that you actively construct and synthesize as a young adult. He put special emphasis on articulating a personal ideology and finding an occupational niche. In meaningful concert with the other elements that make up who you think you are, knowing what you believe and what you hope to accomplish in your work as an adult helps to give you the feeling that you are fundamentally the same person across different situations and over time.

When you have an identity, in Erikson's sense, you know who you are and how you came to be. Moreover, you have a good sense of the person you are becoming, as you move into the future. Identity, then, integrates the past as you recall it and the future as you anticipate it. Although Erikson never explicitly put it this way, identity seems to involve the formulation of a *story for life*, an integrative narrative of the self that brings together your reconstructed past and imagined future in order to explain how you came to be the person you are becoming. To have an identity is to have a life story and to live that story over time.

My own work in personality and developmental psychology emphasizes the idea that identity is created through story. Beginning in our adolescent years, we seek to find the story for our life that makes our past make sense, to show how our past made us the persons we are today and how all of that may lead to what we now imagine our future to be. What I call *narrative identity*, then, is the story that you are working on for your life, an internalized and evolving narrative of the self that works to provide your life with some degree of unity, purpose, and continuity over time. We each construct our own unique story for life, but the story itself is strongly shaped by the forces of family, religion, history, and culture. Moreover, our narrative identities change over time, as we encounter new experiences, as we suffer and flourish across the adult life course, and as we gain new insights into the central characters, plots, settings, scenes, and themes that comprise the stories of our lives. Narrative identity is rarely written in stone. Stories are less fixed than certain other features of our personalities, such as our basic dispositional traits. Many of us continue to rewrite the narrative over the course of our lives.

**Exemplary Life Stories**

What should we do? How should we live? We research psychologists are not shy about
addressing the kinds of questions that Mark and Dorothy raise in their seminal volume. However, we are often vague, clumsy, and philosophically inconsistent when it comes to finding the right words for a prescriptive discourse of identity. As social scientists, we are typically more comfortable with languages that apply to what is rather than what should be. When it comes to life stories, however, people speak freely both of what is and of what should be, as well as what should have been, what might have been good but wasn't, what seemed bad at the time but turned out to be good, what is evil, heroic, redemptive, and on and on. In order to understand the stories people tell about their lives, the psychological researcher needs to be able to detect and to understand prescriptive, morally-valenced languages. My education in the humanities which began at Christ College, my varied life experiences, and my own religious background have tended, I suspect, to help me discern and appreciate these languages; I am better at this sort of thing than most of my colleagues. But reading Leading Lives helped me to clarify and articulate what I have been discerning all along.

In telling the stories of their own lives, participants in my research will often say that a particular decision they made “shows who I truly am,” or “illustrates something that has always been true for me.” They will talk about how they pursued a particular goal or relationship because “I really wanted that,” or because it summoned forth deeply felt emotions of joy, excitement, love, or wonder—feeling states that they associate with being true to themselves. In so doing, my research participants are employing what Mark and Dorothy label as the language of authenticity. Integrating selections from Charles Taylor and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mark and Dorothy describe this language as stemming from the conviction that each individual possesses a unique self that deserves a degree of individual choice and autonomy. With respect to narrative identity, to be authentic is to find my real story.

When people feel that they are authentic, they feel they are presenting and expressing themselves as they truly are. They are cutting through the pretenses of everyday social conventions and expressing something that is deeply “true” and “real.” In the iconic words of Holden Caulfield in A Catcher in the Rye, authentic people are not “phonies.” They know who they are, and they express themselves accordingly, even when such expressions defy societal norms and niceties. Going back at least as far as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Americans have tended to value the authenticity of the autonomous individual over and against what are sometimes seen as the artificial, even oppressive, strictures of the group. Be true to yourself, we are told. Don’t follow the crowd. Look inside yourself for the inner light that tells you who you really are.

As compelling as the language of authenticity can be, it may be unsatisfying for those who question whether being true to the self is always such a good thing for the group. After all, what if my longing for authenticity turns me into a narcissist? The language of virtue, therefore, offers something of an antidote to the individualistic excesses that authenticity can sometimes produce. It challenges the person to live a good life, even if some degree of authenticity is sacrificed in the process. Going back to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, the language of virtue identifies particular character traits that are deemed to be qualities of a good life because, for the most part, they enable people to live together well in groups. Given that human beings evolved to live in complex social groups, an acute sensitivity to virtue is probably embedded in human nature. Moreover, Aristotle argued that citizens are happiest when they live their lives in accord with such virtues as generosity, temperance, and friendship. The world’s great religious traditions all enumerate characteristic virtues for living together in social groups. While each tradition identifies its own unique candidates, there is considerable overlap for such virtues as honesty, fairness, love, self-control, humility, and gratitude, among others.

For many of us, however, leading a life that matters involves even more than finding my true story and living a good life. The languages of authenticity and virtue do not go quite far enough, in that many of us may also feel the need to make a difference in the world. This kind of longing or aspiration runs through many life narratives. My own research has documented its centrality in the life stories of especially caring and productive
midlife adults. Other studies have shown that it is especially salient in the narrative identities of many college students, especially those pursuing careers in medicine, nursing, teaching, and social work. These kinds of stories are often told in the language of vocation.

As Lutherans know, the concept of vocation has its historical roots in the Protestant Reformation and the attendant belief that all Christian men and women are “called” by God to service. As Luther saw it, any kind of regular and legitimate work—from manual labor to parenting to active involvement in the community—might qualify for the status of vocation, as long as the Christian did the work out of love for God and in service of humankind. In each person’s own small way, therefore, he or she could make a positive difference in the world, while glorifying God in the process. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the concept of vocation evolved to encompass the more secular idea that each person may have unique skills and talents that can be used for the good of others, and it loosened its connection to religion. On the contemporary scene, the challenge of vocation is to discover and develop personal gifts and to find ways to use them for the betterment of society.

On college campuses today, the language of vocation provides a strong alternative to the general sentiment that higher education should prepare young men and women to go out into the world to make money. Vocation is not necessarily antithetical to careerism and personal ambition, but it can soften and inform these motivations by adding the critical component of service. In Leading Lives That Matter, Mark and Dorothy bring together a wealth of readings and ideas that aim to promote fluency in the language of vocation. Their selections and discussions also challenge readers to consider how their own lives, and the stories they tell about them, may be shaped to make a positive difference in the world.

As paragons themselves of authenticity, virtue, and vocation, Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass continue to make a positive difference in the lives of their friends, colleagues, and students, and for the readers of their wonderful volume. I can say for certain that my own life story has been enriched by their friendship and by their wise words.

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Few individuals in either the church or the academy have given more thought, read more widely, or written more provocatively on the subject of Christian people following their various callings in the world than Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass. Bass's direction of the Lilly-funded Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith, along with all the publications that have issued from it, have had tangible, wide-spread, and salutary effects on communities of faith as they have worked to give their convictions hands, feet, and hearts of flesh and blood. While it may be difficult to measure the Valparaiso Project's impact with the sort of empirical data an assessment-driven culture demands, anecdotal evidence abounds.

The wake of Schwehn's 1993 volume, *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America*, has grown very wide indeed as it continues to find readers and generate conversation among those who shape and support church-related institutions of higher learning in North America. The network of Lilly Fellows institutions, at least in part another Schwehn brainchild, has grown to nearly one hundred church-related colleges and universities, all of whom have benefited greatly from sustained, focused thinking about teaching and scholarship as Christian vocation.

I count myself among those who have benefited in ways beyond counting for having been a colleague, friend, and conversation partner with Bass and Schwehn over the past thirty years. I can no more imagine how my personal and professional life might have gone without their friendship and influence than I can picture the course of my life had my children never been born. So thoroughly and profoundly do our long-time relationships, along with the stories they generate, shape us, as well as the world we get to inhabit.

*Leading Lives That Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be*, the volume that Schwehn and Bass co-edited, offers up not only a rich anthology of humankind's best thinking about work, vocation, and integrity, but also serves as a window on the editors' scope of learning and their capacity for meaningful engagement with dialog partners who come from many different eras, traditions, and points of view. We might expect to hear many of the voices Bass and Schwehn call into this conversation, among them Aristotle, Tolstoy, and Dorothy Day. But Matt Damon and Ben Affleck? Malcolm X? Sullivan Ballou, a Union soldier in our nation's Civil War whose only literary legacy is a letter he wrote to his wife shortly before he perished in the First Battle of Bull Run? Not likely—unless you know Dorothy Bass and Mark Schwehn, whose practiced ears hear in all of us, published or unpublished, expressions of yearning and struggle to make our lives count for something.

Firmly ensconced in my personal canon on the subject of Christian vocation is Martin Luther's "Treatise on Christian Liberty," the piece in which Luther explicated one of the great paradoxes he came to embrace. "The Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none; and a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all," Luther asserts. In sum, this treatise
describes freedom from and freedom to. By virtue of their baptismal faith, Christians are free from having to justify their existence or behaviors, as if that were within a human being’s capacity in the first place, and they live instead as part of a body the crucified Christ has taken to himself as a husband takes a wife to whom he pledges an eternal bond of faithfulness. Nothing could ever happen, except that I am his and he is mine, the believer trusts.

The influence of Luther shows up all through this book, not only in the bent of the editors’ introductory and summary essays, but in the thinking of numerous anthologized writers.

Freed from making meaning somehow of my own sometimes crazy or pathetic life and circumstances, I am therefore free to serve my neighbor. As Luther puts it, just as Christ “put on” us sinners and acted for us as if he had been what we are, so we “put on” our neighbors and live for them as though their lives are our own. “A Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor—in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love.”

Neither the “Treatise on Christian Liberty” nor any other piece of Luther’s writings appear among those in Leading Lives That Matter. This does not mean, however, that this volume has somehow sidestepped Luther or downplayed his importance. Rather, the influence of Luther shows up all through this book, not only in the bent of the editors’ introductory and summary essays, but in the thinking of numerous anthologized writers. Several Lutherans in the volume invoke or quote Luther, including Schwehn and Bass (45), Gilbert Meilaender (239) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (109), but several Baptists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians seem to have grasped Luther’s paradoxical thinking too.

Not surprisingly, the Bonhoeffer excerpt on vocation, “The Place of Responsibility,” shows the clearest influence of Luther’s thought. In a near paraphrase of the “Treatise on Christian Liberty,” Bonhoeffer writes of how the grace of God in Christ seeks us out in our various places and claims us there, and in response we wear or bear the grace of God as we enter every place life takes us. We respond to the call of Christ, or embody the grace of Christ, in all those places. Moreover, Bonhoeffer asserts, every place among humankind, whether the place where Christ found us or the one in which we find others “is in every respect burdened with sin and guilt, be it a royal throne, the home of a respected citizen, or a shanty of misery” (Leading Lives, 108).

Put another way, the core element of Christ’s work remains ours as well, for the whole of our lives. In one form or another, our primary work is handling sin, just as was Christ’s. One can see this truth even in Frederick Buechner’s now-famous formula for locating the place of one’s vocation. You find the place to which God calls you, says the excerpt included in Leading Lives That Matter, “where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (111).

I admit to having fallen in love with that quote almost forty years ago, when Buechner’s Wishful Thinking first appeared. For a stretch of years, I frequently quoted it in essays, speeches, and sermons when the occasion called for a quick, clear thought on vocation. Among other things, it captures the freedom of Luther’s vision for genuine vocation. There is not one place or role that any of us must find, else our life is wasted on folly or sunk in unrighteousness. No, we can be free lords and dutiful servants in any number of places, some of which we will find and others that will likely find us. I must also confess to having fallen in love with The Velveteen Rabbit around the same time. I tossed that raggedy, old bunny around quite liberally for a few years as well, trying all the while, I suppose, to convince myself that we become real by having our noses rubbed off and our joints go floppy, all for the sake of some child’s love. Nowadays, I cringe whenever I hear someone use the Velveteen Rabbit in a sermon or quote Buechner’s handy GPS for vocation-location,
partly because most often those who do so have quite obviously just discovered them and believe they have found something completely new and partly because both of these homiletical shibboleths can sound distressingly trite if naively deployed.

Wisely, Bass and Schwehn included the entire VOCATION entry in Buechner's Wishful Thinking. In context, the intersection of personal gladness and the world's deep need identified in the oft-quoted line appears not in some magical, trouble-free kingdom, but amidst the same human brokenness Bonhoeffer names as common to the places where Christians find their callings—in Buechner's case the cutthroat world of advertising, a leper colony, or a pit of boredom and depression.

Even in context, however, Buechner's description speaks only of what any one of us has to give the world from the riches of what makes us glad. It does not account for the vocation-seeker's own deep needs, some of which may come from the very shape of his or her gladness, and thus it fails to account for the necessity of others somewhere nearby who will find their vocations by holding up the gladly giving one, seeing to his or her forgiveness, thus making the contribution meaningful, or perhaps possible in the first place.

With a stroke of genius, the editors of Living Lives That Matter have given Buechner's image the perfect piece of context. In the very next entry, we find the concluding paragraphs of a Will Campbell essay titled "Vocation as Grace," in which the wise old Baptist tells what I'll admit is my own, all-time favorite story that describes how vocation works. One evening after attending a circus performance, Campbell met and engaged in conversation the veteran leader of the circus's high-wire troupe. At the end of the conversation, he asked the man why, at his age, he still goes up there on the wires and risks his life every night. The man spoke of the thrill of performing and his love of hearing the audience's reactions, but ultimately he admitted he had to be up there because the rest of the company, most of them his family members, had weaknesses, personality quirks, and attention deficits that made it necessary for him to continue on as a stabilizing influence.

Without his watchfulness, they might all come crashing down. Finally, Campbell asked why the others go up there night after night. After a moment of hesitation and apparent reluctance to answer, the man blurted out as he turned to walk away, "Because I drink too much" (113).

Among the baptized and redeemed, there is no call or demand for flawlessly righteous saviors who must tend the needs of their sinful, defective flocks. Rather, we go up on the various high wires of life together, because any and all of us can and will fall. For as long as possible, we hang onto each other in our places of vocation, each living by the grace of others' contributions. We hang on even when one of us falls, because neither failure nor death, indeed, not even betrayal, serves as warrant for removing any of us from the circle that desperately needs someone, in the stead of the Crucified One, to put us on like a garment and live in us because for now we can't find a way even to breathe.

Finally, I hold up for celebration Garret Keizer's "A Dresser of Sycamore Trees" as another piece in Leading Lives That Matter that bears the stamp of the peculiar sort of freedom Martin Luther learned from St. Paul. Keizer would likely identify his vocation today as writing, but earlier in his life he could not see that such a calling could have sufficient gravity. He thought perhaps he should study for the Episcopal priesthood. If ordained, he could obviously and truly serve God and his neighbors.

In the course of a retreat Keizer entered as a way to discern his vocation, he encountered two telling signs, one of them a quirky, wise, old sinner named Jeffrey who for forty years had routinely "visited" the monastery where Keizer retreated, the other a room full of books, including many that were not written chiefly as theology, but as good fiction, poetry, or thoughtful analysis. All these books, however, bared human hearts and spoke of longing for love and community. From the two signs in juxtaposition, Keizer learned that priests and writers do pretty much the same thing. They both hear confessions. They listen to stories of all the wild, wonderful, and depraved things that human beings do to themselves and others, and in one way or another, they offer it
all up, hand it all to God, the only one who can bear the load. Moreover, at the end of every confession, the priest says to the person confessing, “Have mercy on me, a sinner.” The writer, too, makes confession and begs for mercy from God and from those whose stories he or she has heard—and repeated in the pages of a book.

In handling sin by hearing its sorry tales and lifting them from the solitary burden-bearers who have grown weary and sick to death of carrying them, the writer, just like the priest, puts on his or her neighbor, as Christ put on us, and wields the grace that frees the enslaved to get out of themselves and become, yes, servants of their broken-down neighbors.

Keizer discovered this in a retreat, and the rich, insightful books and essays he has written in subsequent years reveal that he has re-learned that paradoxical truth many times. So have all the rest of us, living in communities of people who trust in the crucified one who takes our place, puts us on, and lives in us, communities like the one in which I live, work, worship, and sin, sometimes boldly and sometimes not so boldly. My community includes Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass, who graciously and more frequently than I likely know put me on and carry and absolve my sins. We, too, discover and re-discover the truth of this curious paradox of freedom and servanthood most every day of the lives which, by some chance, we have been given to share in the same time and place.

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I would love to teach a class comprised of only two texts: Leading Lives That Matter and its companion volume, William C. Placher’s Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation. Together these volumes comprise a library that would enrich the thought and decisions of any college student who worked through them, both in thoughtful solitude and communal conversation. Both offer a liberal education in the subject of vocation that “retrieve[s] questions of meaning and purpose” (Leading Lives, 6). Callings, which I have used for faculty retreats, offers a rich selection of texts from the Christian tradition; Leading Lives casts a wider net. Both help sustain the kind of college education that recent books, such as Mark Roche's Why Choose the Liberal Arts? (2010) and Andrew Delbanco's College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be (2012), have seen in need of restoration.

Both Roche's and Delbanco's books engage Mark's Exiles from Eden (1993), which had a powerful influence on me when I began my professional life at Christ College in the Fall of 1990. In 1994, I was blessed to team-teach a class with Mark, and I learned the way he could carefully focus students’ attention on the text by the incisive questions he would ask. In fact, reading the selection from William James in Leading Lives, with its tacking from tentative thesis to further questions, recalled Mark's own pedagogical presence. Later that decade, I participated in many conversations with Mark and Dorothy in the Lilly Fellows Colloquium, and I was grateful for the penetrating questions both would raise. Indeed, the educational potential of Leading Lives lies not only in its careful selection of stories, poems, and essays, but in the quality of the questions it raises throughout. These questions help students (and their teachers) develop a richer and more precise vocabulary in articulating and acting upon the decision to choose a particular path. Allow me to present some of these questions here:

What is the difference between a good life and a significant one? Is an ethics of authenticity and self-fulfillment commensurate with a life centered around the practice of the virtues, or with a life committed to the self-sacrifice entailed in any Christian calling? Are we justified in committing ourselves to a vocation that may cause others to suffer? Do we, in fact, choose the best part of ourselves when we choose self-sacrifice? How does the work we do shape our character? Should we live in order to work—and thus fulfill our creative identity as imago Dei—or work in order to live—to contemplate the good, true, and beautiful in the company of friends? Or, as Yeats (included in Leading Lives) asks, do we choose “perfection of the life, or of the work”? Is it ever really possible to “balance” a life of work, leisure, and family? Whose counsel should we seek when discerning a vocational path? And even assuming good counsel, how much control do we really exercise in the work we end up doing? What kind of stories do we tell of our lives to make sense of them? Can we, in fact, tell our own story? And, if not, “Who can tell your story?” as Neil Young once sang in his frail falsetto. Tolstoy tells the story of Ivan Ilych, mired in falsity, amour proper, and the denial of death. But he dies caring for others; can a good death redeem a life lived poorly?

In their final editorial notes to this story, Mark and Dorothy cite Isaiah Berlin’s seminal insight.
into Tolstoy: he had the eye of a fox, seeing many disparate things, but the heart of a hedgehog, yearning to unify all into a single vision. As Mark and Dorothy put it, "[Tolstoy's] vocation was to represent in nearly inexhaustible detail many lives in such a way that his readers could gain greater clarity about the issues that mattered so deeply to him. The same spirit and purpose have guided this anthology..." (491). Indeed it has, and this results in the creative tension that animates Leading Lives. The voices it represents at times conflict, and the writers raise questions that seem, at first, to insist upon an either/or. For example, can a life devoted to anonymous daily toil ever be called "significant?"

Perhaps so, even as happily as that affirmed by the Irishman quoted by William James in his essay: "When asked, 'Is not one man as good as another?' [he] replied, 'Yes; and a great deal better, too!'" In fact, both James and Albert Schweitzer are seen as belonging both to the tradition of Christianity, with its emphasis upon the supremely saintly virtues of humility and love, and Democracy, with its insistence upon the equality of all.

While the volume embraces a "both/and" vision, it eschews the contemporary illusion that one "can have it all." Implicit in the book's argument is that diverse ways of living in the world always entail receptive work of discernment and judgment. Upon an either/or. For example, can a life devoted to anonymous daily toil ever be called "significant?"

Implicit in Leading Lives That Matter's argument is that diverse ways of living in the world always entail receptive work of discernment and judgment.

In other words, prudence illuminates both what we should do and who we should be.

Here we might explore one particular tension highlighted in Leading Lives. Aristotle's list of virtues includes magnificence and, more importantly, magnanimity, the virtue which aspires to greatness. Doesn't this contradict Jesus' call to self-giving service? Well, not necessarily, for Aristotle acknowledges that it is finer to sacrifice one's life for a single, noble cause than to persevere more prosaically. For Aristotle, the war hero shines more brightly, and matters more significantly, than George Bailey's quotidian life in Bedford Falls, wonderful as it may have been. But don't most saints choose the more prosaic path? And doesn't such humility ultimately clash with magnanimity? Here is where I would, again, have added just a few more pages to this already capacious anthology: St. Thomas Aquinas's discussion of the tensile interrelation of humility and magnanimity, virtues which he saw as necessary to each other. As God's creatures, we stand in humble, dependent relation to a loving Creator; but created in God's image and likeness, we are called to greatness, and bear, in C.S. Lewis's phrase, "the weight of glory," both now and in the hereafter. Here again is Pieper, summarizing St. Thomas Aquinas on this matter:

Nothing shows the way to a correct understanding of humility so clearly as this: that humility and magnanimity are not only mutually exclusive but also are near to one another and intimately connected: both together are in opposition to pride as well as to faintheartedness.... In the Summa Theologica it is stated, "If one disdains glory in such a manner that he makes no effort to do that which merits glory, that action is blameworthy." On the other side, the magnanimous one is not broken by disgrace; he looks down on it as unworthy of himself.... The magnanimous person submits...
himself not to the confusion of feelings or to any human being or to fate—but only to God.... [A] “humility” that would be too narrow and too weak to bear the inner tension of coexistence with magnanimity is indeed no humility. (1991, 37–39)

The angelic doctor himself stands as an exemplar of such humility and magnanimity. As Denys Turner comments in his recent portrait of Thomas, the great teacher makes himself absent in his teaching: “It is a lovely paradox, one that gets to the heart of what Thomas seems to have wanted to hide from us behind the bulk of his writings, that there is something intensely holy about his absence from them. It reveals a lot about Thomas the man that his writings tell you nothing about Thomas the man. Thomas gets himself entirely out of the way of the act of communication. In short, Thomas is all teacher—a holy teacher, and a professor of theology as holy teaching” (34). As such, Thomas represents a model to anyone who has pursued the vocation of teaching.

Yet how difficult is such self-effacement! I must conclude on a personal note by emphasizing that Leading Lives offers not only a great gift to college students, but to middle-aged folks like me who are striving to lead lives of generativity (to employ Erik Erikson’s virtue, evoked a number of times in this volume). What a joy it was to rediscover works I hadn’t read in decades, and to hear them in a different key: the moving music of Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues” or of Gray’s “Elegy” or Longfellow’s “Village Blacksmith.” And to discover new works: the beautiful description of the canyons of Northern Arizona in the “retreat” rendered by Willa Cather in Song of the Lark, or the melancholy mystery of H. G. Wells’s “Door in the Wall.” Reading the unsentimental Dorothy Day’s deep appreciation of St. Therese of Lisieux, “the little flower,” was an unexpected revelation.

For it seems the saints especially inspire us to lead lives that matter. Their lives seem most compellingly formed, both holy and whole. The saint is called to conform to the pattern of Christ, a pilgrimage of descent into the particulars of adult responsibility, in the hope of eventual ascent and homecoming. The scriptural saints—Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Mary—hear God’s call and answer “Here I am.” The saint responds not with an assertion of autonomous, imperial subjectivity, “I think, therefore I am,” but with an acceptance of finite, particular circumstances—“Here”—and willingness to conform to the infinite Divine—“I am.”

I am grateful to Mark and Dorothy not only for their work, but for the lives that they have led—in their particular place, Valparaiso, Indiana—by which they have inspired so many. They have now inspired me to teach a new class, and I am confident that Leading Lives will inspire both students—and their teachers—for generations.

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Vocation and the Communion of Saints

John Schwehn

As I write this piece honoring my parents, I am also composing a sermon that I will preach on All Saints Sunday. My calling, like my grandfather's and great-grandfather's, is of the ordained persuasion. The pastor saints of my family live on through my vocation, which gives me pause to wonder how much my sense of call is, in fact, directly informed by the lives of my forebears. Luckily, I have a (autographed) copy of Leading Lives That Matter on my bookshelf, which, in its sixth part, explores the question of, "Can I Control What I Shall Do and Become?" Included within this section is the testimony of Thomas Lynch, an undertaker. In his essay entitled "Passed On," Lynch describes the moment in his father's life when he decided to become an undertaker. Lynch has continued in the family profession begun by his father, and he passes it on to his children. As I read his essay, I am reminded of a different piece of writing. This piece was published in The Cresset thirty years ago. It, too, is a writer's effort to locate his present life's work within the longer story of his family. It, too, is the story of a grandfather and a father and a family and a call. It is autobiographical, historical, and theological, and it was written by Mark Schwehn.

In this article, published in 1984 in two parts and titled, "The Communion of Saints: A Journey Into the Past," my dad details a journey toward a deeper understanding of his life in the church, his German Lutheran heritage, and the sacrament of Holy Communion. Geographically, the story he tells takes place in a car traveling from Fort Wayne to Chicago. My mom sits in the front seat, and my sister, Kaethe, in the back. Historically, his journey stretches back four generations, and it traces the peculiar, hidden fault lines between the family he seeks diligently to understand and the church they have all endeavored desperately to love. At the heart of his questioning is a desire to lift up a sacramental theology that offers a welcome to my (at the time) Congregationalist mom and a response to the religious relativism that the church of his youth had come to fear. There is also a longing buried beneath my father's words, a longing to know and to understand all of those saints whose wisdom and whose stories so profoundly formed his own.

Vocation and the communion of saints: these two pieces of our Christian theological tradition received major makeovers from Martin Luther. Just as he broadened the doctrine of vocation to include the work of those outside the confines of religious orders, Luther also extended the title of saint to those outside the cemetery. No longer should we speak of saints only as those who have died, Luther believed. The saints are the living, too, and it is because God uniquely calls, blesses, and forgives each one of us that we are given a vocation to love God's beloved creation. I think my father understood this when he wrote that article thirty years ago. But what he perhaps did not yet understand were the myriad ways in which our vocation can—must!—be embodied and lived out every single day, and this is one of the reasons why I love my mother.

Her articulation of a Christian faith practiced in the everyday both challenges and empowers
those who struggle to connect the mundane routines of life with a sense of vocation. She reminds us that God calls us from within the ordinary roles and tasks we perform, that each new day is also a new opportunity to remember our baptisms and go forth in the name of Christ. Her life-affirming, embodied, experiential lens of faith found, I believe, a wonderful partner in my dad’s deeply rooted Lutheran heritage, in his faith in and dedication to the life and work of the church.

Thirty years ago, when my dad submitted that article to The Cresset, neither of my parents could have guessed that their next two children (twins!) would be called to serve this same peculiar, broken, beautiful church as pastors. Nor could they have predicted that one of those twins would consult a book that they together edited as he journeyed deeper into understanding this call. And yet, how could they possibly be surprised by these things? For a vital part of their vocation—as professionals, parents, partners, and parishioners—has been to encourage all of us (we saints of God) to journey deeper, further into considering our own. It is a vocation of careful scholarship and discernment and imagination. But above all, it is one of love.

So yes (of course!) my call, like Thomas Lynch’s, is influenced by these two people and by the generations that preceded them. And it is informed by the ramblings of a sixteenth century monk who declared me, of all people, a saint of God. And, for today (and always), I receive it all as a gift. For though my call to ordained ministry joins an old familiar story, the cries of my neighbor are new every morning. We still proclaim Christ crucified and risen, and the bread and wine that my Missouri Synod grandfather and great-grandfather blessed at the table is the same body of Christ broken open today (and tomorrow) for the life of the world. The communion of saints with whom I gather at the table each Sunday encompasses generations of the faithful who have formed the person I am becoming. But today I give thanks to God for the grace and wisdom shown to me in the lives of those who knew me first and best: my parents.

Saints indeed. ¶

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Bring Me-Togethers
Reflections on Pregnancy and Vocation

Martha Schwehn Bardwell

"I believe that God has created me together with all that exists." So begins Luther's explanation of the first article of the Apostle's Creed in his Small Catechism. The childlike simplicity of this explanation shouldn't fool us into thinking it is only meant for confirmation students and those new to the Christian faith. Here is a sentence not meant for memorization but for meditation. Meditation, yes, as we seek to be conformed to Christ and his unworldly wisdom like the children we all are. With the simplicity of faith and trust in words just as these, the Kingdom of God opens to us. We see ourselves not as the world sees us—as isolated, as random, as "consumer"—but as created by a loving God as a bunch of "me-togethers." These words can be liberating for those of us who inhabit an age of reckless consumerism, of get-ahead individualism, and of suicidal destruction of ecosystems.

Even if our minds have been taught to ignore it, we all know this truth of me-togetherness, because we are bodies, bodies that came from other human beings' bodies, bodies that are sustained by eating other things once living. I have known this in a particular way as a twin, having emerged into the world together with John, having shared every birthday with him and many, many life experiences. I know it in my own body especially now, as I prepare to have a baby this coming June. God is creating another little me-together in my womb right now. We are me-togethers.

Indeed, I believe that giving birth and being born are intimate, powerful moments when this deep truth of me-togetherness is most manifest in its painful, emotional, bloody, screaming way. After that in the parent-child relationship, the me-togetherness is most intense, as a child continues to depend on the nurture of parents or other guardians and to be shaped profoundly by the environments, stories, questions, and concerns that the parents surround the child with for years to come.

As I find myself preparing to give birth, keenly aware of the child forming in my womb and the unpredictable ways it will change me and I will change it, I can't help but reflect on vocation, to return to the perennial Schwehn dinnertime conversation topic. How is God calling me in the midst of pregnancy to be faithful to this other life, to this most intimate of neighbors? Early on in the pregnancy, I felt a growing pressure and impatience to have life figured out, to become more articulate, more of an activist, to be the best friend and pastor-in-training and partner ever, to eliminate my hypocrisies one by one. Of course, that isn't possible. When I let go of perfectionistic fantasies, I recognized that the undergirding tug I feel is a good one; it is a tug to be more faithful, more committed, more loving, in other words, to listen to God and to be rooted and grounded there. It is a tug to push away the old familiar idols of money and self that certain pregnancy literatures lift up (just buy this thing for your baby and it will be perfect; just focus on yourself and your birth experience rather than the fuller mysterious truth of motherhood and your loss of control) and turn with humble terror, with trust, to God the Creator, who is bringing this life forth through me and who will equip me and accompany me for the task of motherhood.
So rather than reflecting narrowly on the vocation of a pregnant woman as unique from others, I instead have been thinking more about how the experience of pregnancy has given me an opportunity for new—and old—insight into what the Christian life means. This experience is an intensification of something all of us know and experience as bodies, this marvelous interconnectedness, this me-togetherness. And this is the first thing I have returned to. Too often, our conversation about vocation can be stunted by uncritical individualism. The question, “How is God calling me?” should be reframed more often as, “How is God calling us to be people of God together?” Particularly as we come face-to-face with larger systems of injustice and destruction in our world—or indeed, with cancer diagnoses and car accidents and other kinds of suffering—we need to be mindful of how action together as community is necessary. Sometimes I want to run and hide from facing things like climate change, because I feel absurdly alone and therefore despairing. The truth is, we find more power and hope than we thought possible when we hear and respond to the call of God together as people of God. New collaborations and practices and gifts are born then.

A second wondering I have had is about sensing vocation amid great vulnerability and amid great power. On the one hand, I have found myself very vulnerable in this season. When someone came into church recently and asked me to help get their car unstuck from a snowbank, I had to decline, to play it safe, and let others go. I can’t lift and move things and be independent like I want to; I can’t always “serve” in that way. Of course, all of this is minor compared to what many other people, suffering from illnesses or living with differing abilities, go through, but I have thought about the grace of accepting limitations and accepting the help of others as a Christian calling. Again, when we see ourselves as me-togethers, as part of a body of the people of God, we can dispense with the heroism and martyr complexes that sometimes arise when we think we need to act in a saving, decisive way alone.

As I embrace this vulnerability, I am also very cognizant of the power I will soon have. The power to name this child, to attach a certain cadence and narrative that the child will carry. The power of shaping environments, of saying “yes” and “no” to things and people who want to encounter this being. In all of this, I am aware that whatever power I think I have is still vulnerable power. Despite my best efforts as gatekeeper, influences will slip in, bad ones and godly ones. As biologist and activist Sandra Steingraber has written, breast milk is a site of toxic trespass (2001). Whether we like it or not, our babies are going to glean harmful toxins from us; they are going to have to reckon with our society’s gendered expectations; they are going to be exposed to sin, ours and theirs and others’. But along with that, greater than that, will be God’s grace working to shape this child and leading it to shape me in new ways as well as God’s promise to love this child to the end and beyond. This is the faith I cling to.

Finally, I have found myself wondering about vocation and liminality. So often, I think that many of us Lutherans, particularly those of us who read The Cresset and have a certain degree of institutional power and privilege, can tend to get stuck in what I’ll call an “establishment” sense of vocation. Our vocation, our calling, is equated with living out the responsibilities and roles of being a parent, citizen, scholar, churchgoer, and on and on. Our vocational questions are focused on discerning which role one is most fit to inhabit: doctor, or lawyer, or gardener? However, sometimes we find ourselves in the liminal places, in the not-yet or simply stuck in the not. Being pregnant is a not-yet place; I am a not-yet parent. And so living among us we have not-yet citizens (or just not citizens), and we have unemployed people and people looking to be employed. How does “vocation” as a concept speak to people in those places, in line, in waiting? What do we have
to say to them, to ourselves? Again, I believe that a more communal sense of vocation can be helpful here.

From the vantage point of pregnancy, I mean to assert this critique of thinking too much in an establishment framework with an accompanying affirmation, that wherever we are, established or not, we are all in the process of becoming something else. This is a deeply Christian insight, one that Luther affirms in his *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (1521):

This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it, the process is not yet finished, but it is going on, this is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.

We have less control over life than we wish, we me-togethers created by God. And that can be a blessed thing. May we all embrace the painful, emotional, bloody, screaming blessedness of new birth whenever and wherever it happens to us.

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ON THE POET

Kaethe Schwehn is the co-editor of Claiming Our Callings: Toward a New Understanding of Vocation in the Liberal Arts (Oxford, 2014) and the author of a forthcoming memoir, Tailings (Cascade Books). Her poems and prose have appeared in journals such as Witness, jubilat, Minnesota Review, and Crazyhorse. She teaches at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.

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