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Milton Valentine on Faith and Science

Stephen R. Herr

[The Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic presentation in conjunction with the Gettysburg Seminary 2016 Spring Academy] It is an honor to be with you this morning on this historic campus and in the chapel where I was ordained and married. I want to thank the program committee of the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic for inviting me to present this morning on Milton Valentine, a theologian, and I use that term decidedly because there are many terms that could be used to describe my ancestor Milton Valentine: pastor, faculty member, administrator, principal, president, yet it is in his role as a theologian where I believe Milton Valentine's deepest legacy resides. His engagement in the work and discipline of theology for the sake of the gospel and the ministry of the church merits our attention as we explore the themes of science and the Christian life this week.

Four days before Christmas in 1868 Milton Valentine made his way to Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church for his inauguration as the third president of Gettysburg College, then known as Pennsylvania College. He was 43 years old and had been ordained a Lutheran clergyman for the past 16 years. After reminding the college community that he had not sought the office of president and only reluctantly accepted their summons, he delivered his inaugural address entitled "Present Necessities in Collegiate Education."¹

Born and raised a Lutheran Christian, now speaking as a Lutheran minister in a Lutheran Church, addressing a student body, faculty, and board of trustees largely comprised of Lutherans, it should come as no surprise that he began describing how education essentially should be deeply and vitally Christian. "To my mind, Christianity is the centre and heart of all truth. Every truth, even of nature, is partial and under the torpor of death with-

out Christ.”² Valentine would go on to present the methods and subjects of study to be pursued. What came as a surprise to some, including the Board Chair, former congressman Moses McClean, who argued in his address prior to Valentine’s for a prominent place for Latin and Greek languages when it came to the essential subjects of study, was that Valentine led with the importance of the sciences.

“The rapid advance of science and the progress of the age have brought us into new relations. They impose new necessities to which the College must not fail to respond.”³ Valentine urged that larger space be given in the collegiate course to the natural sciences. “These things,” he went on, “have stirred the eager interest and deepest exploitation of these fruitful realms of nature.”⁴ While immensely supportive of the sciences and their role in the curriculum of study at the college, Valentine was also quick to challenge scientific speculations and the dangers that they bring. Advocating for a balanced curriculum that included science, he concluded that Christianity and ultimately God must stand at the center of all the sciences.

In this inaugural address, we see the beginnings of Valentine’s interest to engage theology and science. His presidency at the college and his teaching at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg led Valentine into new fields of intellectual interest. A brief overview of his life and career provides the backdrop for his theology and his approach to the sciences.

On New Year’s Day 1825, the fifth President of the United States, James Monroe, held his final annual White House reception. 64 miles due north in Uniontown, Carrol County, Maryland, on that same day, Jacob and Rebecca Valentine held a reception of their own for the birth of their son, Milton. He was their fifth of what would be six sons and three daughters. After growing up on his family’s farm and educated in nearby Taneytown, Valentine entered Gettysburg College, then Pennsylvania College, in 1848, graduating in 1850. He distinguished himself and was called upon to teach in the Preparatory Department. After graduation he marched up to this glorious hill, which a little over a decade later United States troops would use to retreat through the town, and enrolled at the Lutheran Theological Seminary. Valentine graduated from the oldest institution of higher education in the town of Gettysburg in 1852 and the Synod of West Pennsylvania licensed him in 1852. A year later the Maryland Synod ordained him a minister in the Lutheran Church on October 25.⁵

Soon after his licensure he served as a supply pastor in Winchester, Virginia, while their pastor, Charles Porterfield Krauth, traveled to the West Indies with his wife who was ill at the time. In 1854 he travelled over the Allegheny mountains to serve as the assistant to William Passavant in Allegheny, doing missionary work and serving as pastor of the Lutheran

Church on Chartiers Creek on the banks of the Ohio River. In 1854 he became the pastor in Greensburg. In 1855 he declined a call to teach at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, then housed in Lexington, South Carolina. It would not be the last time Valentine would decline a call to an institution.

He left Greensburg accepting a call to serve as the principal at the Emmaus Institute, located in Middletown, Pennsylvania. During this time, his journal noted that on December 18, 1855, he was married to “Miss Maggie G. Galt at 7 o’clock in the evening at her Fathers by the Rev. Robert Griery. This about the best days work I ever did.”⁶ The next day he recorded that he went on a bridal tour with his bride to Baltimore, then on to Washington, and preached in Washington for Rev. J. G. Bartley.⁷ After serving four years with the Emmaus Institute, his final pastorate was a call to serve St. Matthew’s Lutheran church in Reading, left vacant by the Reverend Dr. J.A. Brown, a future president of Gettysburg Seminary who left St. Matthew’s to serve as president of Newbury College. In 14 years of ministerial service, Valentine served across the territory of what are now Regions 7 and 8 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and in six of its current synods. It provided him with a broad understanding of the needs of the church and its different cultural contexts, from urban settings in Pittsburgh and Reading to more rural and remote congregations. This would serve him well as he entered into the education ministry of the General Synod.

During his service with congregations, Valentine modelled the important role of a pastor-scholar. While serving faithfully as a preacher and provider of pastoral care to those entrusted to his care, Valentine dedicated himself to scholarship and an academic discipline that resulted in several articles a year for Lutheran journals, especially the *Evangelical Quarterly Review*. Valentine understood the value in continuing one’s education, expanding one’s understanding of the on-going revelation of God’s Word, and rooting one’s pastoral ministry in the work of the academy. It was this rigor and scholarship on a wide range of topics, including justification by grace through faith, St. Paul’s preparations for apostleship, the principle of reform, the importance of piety in ministers of the gospel, and church music that led him to be considered a candidate to teach at several Lutheran institutions.

In 1865 he declined a call to Wittenberg to teach homiletics, history, pastoral theology, and church government, and in the same year he was elected the chair of Ecclesiastical History and Church Polity at the Theological Seminary of the General Synod at Gettysburg, a call he accepted and began in 1866. In his installation address entitled “The Relation of Sacred History to Proper Theological Education,” he concluded, “In humility but

with earnestness stimulated by the manifest importance of the work to which you have called me, I shall now enter upon it, hoping for both your indulgence and approval, and looking for the help and blessing of Him who 'loved the Church and gave himself for it.'"⁸

A year into this service Illinois State University came knocking and asked him to be its president. He declined that presidency, and a year after that in 1868 Pennsylvania College president Henry L. Baugher died and Valentine was unanimously elected as president. Consistent with most of the invitations he received from institutions of higher education, Valentine declined; not because he did not have a sense of loyalty to his undergraduate alma mater but rather because he believed strongly in the importance of teaching and preparing students for the ministry. He valued his service on the faculty at this seminary. Not long after receiving his answer, the board of trustees at Gettysburg College unanimously voted a second time to call him to serve as president.

After much pressure from the board, friends, and colleagues, the Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Polity accepted the presidency of Gettysburg College, a position he held until 1884. Valentine was a reluctant president, and historian Charles Glatfelter in his history of the college noted how he was undoubtedly more comfortable as a teacher than an administrator, in part at least because of his gentle personality and strong scholarly interests. Yet, documents show he handled adeptly financial and student matters as well as diplomatically responding to irate fathers who refused to admit that their offspring could do any wrong.⁹

President Valentine continued to teach at the seminary at their request until 1873, the year Samuel Simon Schmucker died, and then again in 1880. Drawn back to the classroom fulltime, he resigned his presidency to take up the seminary presidency in 1884 and to become its chair of systematic theology, serving almost 20 more years in those positions. He retired in 1903 at age 81 and died three years later in February of 1906.

What emerges from Valentine's life is the portrait of a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, who understood himself to be forgiven and redeemed by Jesus Christ and granted the gift of faith from a providential and benevolent God. Valentine was an educator deeply devoted and committed to the important exchange of ideas and knowledge between faculty and students. Humble and reluctant, he was nevertheless an effective administrator. Respected for his intellectual prowess and his unswerving devotion to the General Synod, its congregations, ministers, and educational institutions, Valentine was beloved by many throughout the church. At the invitation of students he emerged in 1904 out of retirement to deliver eight lectures on the relationship of science and philosophy to theology.¹⁰

On September 26, 1884, Milton Valentine approached the preaching desk at the front of Christ Lutheran Church in Gettysburg to deliver his second presidential inaugural address at that location. Here he was again in his home congregation, where he worshipped regularly for 40 years, delivering another treatise on education. This one set out to address the demands and necessities of theological education.

He understood the doctrinal basis of the seminary, the General Synod, and of his own faith to be neither Zwinglian nor Calvinistic but rather a true positive Lutheran Christian theology in clear contrast to other and variant systems of Christian doctrine. He began by addressing the doctrinal issues before Lutheranism in the eastern part of North America. He laid out his position as one which he described to be a "true, positive Lutheranism" and furthermore a "catholic Lutheranism of the Augsburg Confession."¹¹ He went on to set forth "a Lutheranism in whose consistent trueness and freeness a Luther and a Melancthon can worship side by side, and which presents our Church, as was meant by the Reformers ... a revived apostolic Christianity for the world."¹² Valentine challenged what he called "Form of Concord confessionalism" where the development of doctrinal theology of the church ceased. For Valentine, theological training must recognize the principle of development. God's revelation was progressive through the Testaments and such progressivism continues with Christ's Church.¹³

Valentine saw the repristination of late sixteenth-century Lutheran theology as stagnate and unable theologically to address new concerns, challenges, and problems. While he respected General Council theologian Charles Porterfield Krauth, this General Synod theological champion would not follow Krauth's University of Erlangen approach. In his *Conservative Reformation* Krauth laid out a confessional Lutheranism where reason, the speculations or theories of science, were irrelevant to the claims of Christianity.¹⁴ Not so for Valentine.

After outlining the significance of doctrinal soundness in ministerial training, his frustration over the number of "Rip Van Winkles in the pulpit", and his desire to adhere to the institution's constitutional requirements of doctrine, Valentine noted that he saw no theological demand in his day that was in conflict with the doctrinal basis of the seminary. Theological education must recognize the principle of development. With doctrine and the principle of development firmly in place, Valentine echoed his first presidential inaugural 14 years earlier by moving quickly to address the question of science, and once again this theme of science figured prominently in his address.

Theological training must recognize a distinct demand also in connection with the progress of science and knowledge in our times.

Unchanging Gospel goes face to face with advancing and different science in every age. There has never been a day like ours for real progress in science and daring speculation in the name of science.¹⁵

Valentine, like those before him and those after, often understood the contemporary challenges of culture, technology, and science as unprecedented. Yet, reading Valentine's inaugural reminds one that each generation of Christ's followers faces challenges. Valentine understood this as the very nature of the progress of history and the world.

Valentine dismissed the oft-talked about conflict between science and Christianity, claiming that it was a figment.¹⁶ In the end, Valentine would claim that despite speculation and challenges, "Christianity grasps the hands of science and would walk hand in hand with it through the works of God and in the way to heaven."¹⁷ He did not advocate that pastors be prepared to preach scientific theory, however, he did argue for the necessity that they be able to preach the gospel truths in light of current developments in scientific knowledge, and this included such things as evolutionary theory and Darwinism. Valentine argued that human beings constantly found their ways of thinking in a state of flux.¹⁸ He went on to say, "the church's accepted theological system is enriched, deepened, strengthened and illustrated by the light that continues to shine on it out of God's word and that especially which applies its living truth in fresh applications to the new conditions of the Church in our day and mind."¹⁹

Close to 20 years later in his seminal two-volume *Christian Theology*, Valentine continued to advocate for a faith engaged with the world of reason and science.

Never, perhaps, has there been more need than at the present of settling carefully the great presuppositions to a correct formulation of Christian theology. The need has come from the special direction and activity of modern inquiry and speculative criticism. New conditions have arisen. Theology must face them.²⁰

In foreshadowing an event such as this Spring Academy, Valentine argued that the training of our seminarians needs to account for this scientific condition. Science is the realm of reason, and the sciences are not outside the realm of faith.

Shortly into his service as president and chair of systematic theology, S.G. Griggs and Company of Chicago published Valentine's volume entitled *Natural Theology, or, Rational Theism*.²¹ Indicating the absence of any suitable textbook covering the various forms of theistic evidence, Valentine determined

such a volume necessary. Others thought so as well. The *Methodist Review* noted Valentine's ability and satisfactory manner to address arguments for a power evidenced in nature, and the *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church South* referred to the book as valuable.²² It became widely used as a textbook in colleges and seminaries across denominational lines.

Alone among nineteenth-century American Lutheran theologians, Valentine sought to address both the advances in the physical sciences as well as philosophy. Furthermore, he understood that issues such as evolutionary theory and Darwinism could not simply be ignored. These hypotheses, as he liked to label them, must be met and engaged by the church. This is why in his *Natural Theology* and *Christian Theology* he devoted significant attention to them.

In his two-volume systematic theology entitled *Christian Theology*, Valentine addressed early in the work his understanding of the sources of theology as including both revelation and reason. These were to be seen as not contradictory but in agreement. Valentine was quick to note, however, that to his mind hypotheses were not science or unrevealed dogmas. In addressing evolutionary theory, he sought to call attention to the fact that the theory was not yet proved and was therefore a speculative or tentative hypothesis. Nevertheless, he did not seek to disprove it. While he would not embrace it as some theologians and many scientists had done, he did leave the door slightly ajar for future acceptance, should the hypothesis indeed be proved. What is also noteworthy is that he references the *Origin of Species* in this *Christian Theology* and clearly had read it.²³

Systematically, as you would expect, Valentine addresses natural selection and survival of the fittest. Valentine shows that he was engaged with the source material and with reflections on the topic from both scientists and theology.

How utterly incongruous that in the creation that starts closest to God, the most immediate to the productive impact of the Absolute Intelligent Personality there should be found only what is most unlike him, what is indeed the utmost antithesis to that which created it, what is able to reach personality only after untold eons of evolutionary working.²⁴

That comment sums up Valentine's take on Darwin. He was not a harsh writer, but he was occasionally impassioned. "The Divine and the human, God and nature, are one and Christian theism is being confused and lost behind an ideal pantheism," concluded Valentine about Darwin and his hypothesis and those in the Christian community who embraced it.²⁵

Yes, Valentine embraced science, but he had his limitations. Likewise he would not embrace the emerging biblical criticism. He saw it as an assault on Christian truth and doctrine. In doing so it would limit Valentine from taking the next steps in the interplay of science and theology. Clearly, he could and would go only so far.

In rejecting evolutionary theory and biblical criticism, Valentine demonstrated that he was ultimately a man of his age. His systematic theology would remain the text for a generation of students at Gettysburg Seminary, however, as systematic theologian Eric Crump noted, it never received a second printing and its lasting legacy on theological education waned. As the early twentieth century developed and the world found itself in a Great War, the discussion of science and theology would move beyond Valentine.

Valentine was a pioneer in Lutheran circles and more broadly in the American theological circles. My research has yet to yield another American systematic theologian of the second half of the nineteenth century who addressed the issue of science as repeatedly and thoroughly as Valentine. On the issue of science he aligned himself with Friedrich Schleiermacher, who said, “Unless the Reformation from which our church first emerged endeavors to establish an eternal covenant between the living Christian faith and completely free, independent scientific inquiry, so that faith does not hinder science and science does not exclude faith, it fails to meet adequately the needs of our time.”²⁶ Furthermore, his theological tendencies show strong affinity with Isaak Augustus Dorner and the mediating school of theology. Valentine’s references to Dorner in *Christian Theology* demonstrate that he was a serious scholar maintaining contact and keeping abreast of the wider theological conversations, especially in Germany and England.

Valentine’s ability to hold Schleiermacher’s eternal covenant between faith and science was illustrated in the lives of his sons. His interest in science rubbed off on his son Sterling Gait Valentine, who graduated from his father’s undergraduate alma mater in 1880 and became a chemist. Sterling would go on to work his entire career as a chemist and manager of iron and steel furnace companies from Reading to New York and Canada. Milton’s dedication to the gospel of Jesus Christ and Christ’s church influenced his youngest son, Milton H. Valentine, who followed his brother and father in graduating from Pennsylvania College in 1882 while his father was serving as president. Milton entered Gettysburg Seminary, graduating in 1887, and served in Bedford, Pennsylvania, and at Messiah Lutheran Church in Philadelphia for seven years. Like his father he was an editor, and from 1899-1915 he served as the editor of the *Lutheran Observer*. In 1916, a decade following his father’s death, he returned to this institution to serve as its Professor of English Bible and History until his retirement in 1930.

Interestingly, he followed his father’s footsteps in declining the presidency of Gettysburg College, but unlike his father, he was not asked to reconsider his decision nor offered the presidency a second time.

Milton Valentine’s lasting legacy for most is the large late nineteenth-century hall that bears his name just two doors down the street. Built in the mid 1890’s and remodeled a little over a hundred years later, it is the venue for classes, office meetings, board meetings, ping pong games, coffee breaks, mail deliveries, and book buying. As a result his name is lifted up daily on this campus and is seen by a multitude of visitors every year who drive through campus.

However, today I invite us to recall a servant of Christ whose humility and devotion to the gospel, the church of Jesus Christ, to a catholic Lutheranism of the Augsburg Confession, to theology and science, serves as a witness and inspiration.

A product of his times, Valentine nevertheless sought to move the church, theological education, and the seminary forward to face the theological challenges of his day. Today, lectures such as Duane Larson’s on the relationship of Quantum Physics and the Holy Trinity in the 1994 Ernst Lewis Hazelius lecture series here at the seminary have become commonplace. Today, it is not a surprise that this seminary would center its Spring Academy week around the relationship of science and theology.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the work and writing of Milton Valentine, the most original and systematic theologian of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, advanced the church and its institutions to engage and embrace the interplay of faith, theology, and science. As we begin several days devoted to these themes, we pause to recognize and give thanks to God for one who helped blaze the trail for the theological conversations and explorations of our day.

Notes

- 1 Valentine, Milton, “Inaugural Address: Present Necessities in Collegiate Education” in *Inauguration of Milton Valentine D.D., as President of Pennsylvania College, Gettysburg, Penn’a* (Gettysburg, PA: “Star and Sentinel” Book and Job Printing Office, 1869) 23-52.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 5 Abdel Ross Wentz, ed., *Alumni Record*, vol. 2: *Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary* (Harrisburg, PA: The Evangelical Press, 1964) 38.

- 6 Milton Valentine, "Journal", Archives, Abdel Ross Wentz Library, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Milton Valentine, "The Relation of Sacred History to Proper Theological Education," *Evangelical Quarterly Review* 69 (January 1867) 25.
- 9 Charles H. Glatfelter, *A Salutary Influence: Gettysburg College, 1832-1985* (Gettysburg: Gettysburg College, 1987) 225.
- 10 Milton Valentine, *The Relations of Science and Philosophy to Theology: Lectures to the Students of the Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, PA* (printed by the Lutheran Theological Seminary students for their own use; Gettysburg, PA: News Press, 1904).
- 11 Milton Valentine, "Inaugural Discourse," *The Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (1884) 598.
- 12 Ibid., 598.
- 13 Ibid., 599-600.
- 14 Charles Porterfield Krauth (1823-1883) published *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* in 1875.
- 15 Valentine, "Inaugural Discourse," 601.
- 16 Ibid., 602.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., 600.
- 19 Ibid., 601.
- 20 Milton Valentine, *Christian Theology* (2 vols.; Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Publication Society, 1906) 1:1.
- 21 Milton Valentine, *Natural Theology, or, Rational Theism* (Chicago, IL: S.G. Griggs and Company, 1885).
- 22 Review of *Natural Theology* by Milton Valentine, in *Methodist Review* 68 (January 1886) 168 and Review of *Natural Theology* by Milton Valentine in *The Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (1879) 23/1 (January 1886) 144.
- 23 Valentine, *Christian Theology*, 1:395.
- 24 Ibid., 414-415.
- 25 Ibid., 415.
- 26 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr. Lücke* (trans. James Duke and Francis Fiorenza; Chicago, IL: Scholars Press, 1981) 64.

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God, Evolution, Intelligent Design, and Dover, Pennsylvania: A Hopeful Retrospective

Warren M. Eshbach

[Gettysburg Seminary 2016 Spring Academy] On a warm spring afternoon in June of 2004, our son, a biology teacher at Dover Area High School came striding down the sidewalk. I presumed that he was coming to share some exciting news about one of our grandchildren. Instead he said, "Dad, would you like to come to the school board meeting with me this evening?" My response was, "Why in the world would I want to do that? What's up?" I asked. "Our high school science department badly needs new biology textbooks," he continued. "We have reviewed a revised edition of the current textbook which our staff believes is the best resource, but the school board is very reluctant to purchase the books because some members of the board believe that they teach evolution according to Charles Darwin."

I was intrigued enough to say yes to this invitation, which began my involvement in the "Intelligent Design" issue as a resident of the Dover Area School District. Before going to that board meeting, I contacted a friend who was a Visiting Professor at Juniata College. She was a biologist with an M.Div. degree. On the basis of the information that my son and I provided, she said that it was likely that we were dealing with creationists. As it turned out, she was correct.

What I saw at that school board meeting was astounding. It was a packed house, and as we found our seats a school board member's spouse was standing and speaking as if she were preaching at a revival meeting. She was expounding her views as to why it was not Christian to be teaching evolution instead of the Genesis story of creation from the Bible. She encouraged people to become "born again." As I listened to her, I whispered

to my Son, “Where have you brought me? Are we at a school board meeting or a tent revival?” When she finished amidst some shouts of “Amen,” my son put his hands under my elbows, literally lifted me out of my chair and said firmly, “Now go and answer that!” Never before was this particular son of mine so eager to hear me speak!

Quickly, in what seemed like mere seconds, I formulated a response based on my understanding of what I had heard and what I perceived was happening. I had no inkling that the beginning of an historic event paralleling the 1925 Scopes Trial was about to begin. From that moment forward my understanding of science and religion would be expanded, my hermeneutical understanding of scripture would be challenged, and my life and faith would be changed.

One disclaimer on my part that I make at the beginning of this presentation is that I am not a biologist. If my Pottstown, Pennsylvania high school biology teacher or my Gettysburg College professor of biology are still living and knew that I was tackling this subject, they would both laugh and shake their heads. If they are dead, there may be some fault lines around their grave sites, for I am the last person that they would have picked to address this subject that has so much to do with biological science. The truth is that I speak to this subject not as a scientist by any stretch of the imagination but as a theologian and practitioner of Christian ministry who learned from my ministry formation at college and two seminaries that it is important to take the word of hope to the “crossroads of history and life.”

As a practical theologian and retired pastor, the Dover situation forced me to begin a study of contemporary science and biology issues as well as reacquaint myself with the exegetical implications of Genesis 1-2. I discovered that Charles Darwin continues to be an old player in a new debate surrounding creationism and evolution, with a new twist called Intelligent Design (ID). In addition, the subsequent lawsuit that would play out in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, known as *Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School District*, would present new insights as to the “establishment clause” of the U.S. Constitution.

As if those two areas of learning were not enough, I saw issues of leadership and governance, or lack thereof, playing out on the social, political, and religious stage of the Dover community. During the ensuing months, the media, the school board and the community began to involve themselves in this issue. It soon became clear from news reports that the general public, including two thirds of the school board membership, as well as some church leaders in the community, were fairly ignorant of science in general. Many persons, myself included at that time, saw science as some-

thing learned in school and then forgotten. There was and continues to be a disconnect between science and life. More disconcerting, however, was a surfacing belief of many in the community that biology that teaches evolution is anti-God.

In her book *The Devil in Dover*, Lauri Lebo describes how these attitudes played a role at the very beginning of this debate, when a high school janitor saw a mural in a science classroom that depicted “an evolving line of our ape-like ancestors running across a savannah.” The ape-like figure slowly developed into a human with genitalia showing. The student, who enjoyed painting, created the mural for his senior graduation project and saw nothing controversial about it. After graduation he gave it to his favorite teacher (who happened to be chair of the science department) and forgot all about it. But the janitor could not forget! He showed it to some school board members on a summer tour of the building, who interpreted it to mean that this offensive picture was being used daily in science class. The janitor later admitted to removing the mural without permission from anyone and burning it with some school board members present.¹

Another view in this distrust of science by Christians with a strongly fundamentalist perspective was that the nation was disintegrating because evolution was being taught, and that the view of the United States as a Christian nation-state was being undermined by “the myth of the separation of church and state.” At one meeting, a board member stated that “separation of church and state is a myth. There is no separation.”² Both of these stories reflect the disconnect and distrust that exist in our culture about the subject of evolution.

As we learn more about this story, let us take a quick look at some demographics of the Dover community. The following demographic shows trends from the 2000 census, since these figures are pertinent to the Dover community in the 2003-2006 period when the action of the school district and the subsequent lawsuit took place.

*Demographics*³

According to the 2000 census, the total population of Dover Area School District is approximately 25,000. This includes Dover Township, Dover Boro, and Washington Township, all of which are in York County.

The racial makeup:

- 97.41% Caucasian
- 1.03% Hispanic
- 0.92% Afro-American

- 0.45% Asian
- 0.19% Native American

Age make-up:

- 25% 18 yrs. and under
- 7% 19-24 years
- 31% 25-44 years
- 25% 45-64 years
- 12% 65 years and older

Median income:

- \$46,845 per household
- \$53,252 per family

Per capita income:

- \$20, 513

Below poverty level:

- 4.2% of population
- 2.8% of families

Into this rural/suburban small community, the situation created by the Dover Area School District Board of Directors and the subsequent lawsuit centered, in my mind, around the issues of religion and science, church and state, and leadership and governance. These three issues framed the debate and the controversy. Although many in the news media wished to focus on “Intelligent Design”, and those in the political arena wanted to hone in on the church/state implications, this was and is not adequate to see the whole picture. We must also look at the issue of governance and leadership.

One news reporter even admitted to me that while issues such as governance and leadership were important, they were “small stuff compared to the headlines that Intelligent Design can create.” I reminded the reporter that it is the “small stuff” when left unattended by leadership that creates chaos in governance. In this context then, we move now into the developing challenges.

Religion and Science

The statement that the Dover Area School District Board approved on November 19, 2004 that stirred the imminent controversy reads as follows:

The Pennsylvania Academic Standards requires students to learn about Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and eventually to take a standardized test of which evolution is a part. Because Darwin’s Theory is a theory, it continues to be tested as new evidence is discovered. The Theory is not a fact. Gaps in the Theory exist for which there is no evidence. A theory is defined as a well-tested explanation that unifies a broad range of observations. Intelligent Design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin’s view. The reference book, *Of Pandas and People*, is available for students who might be interested in gaining an understanding of what Intelligent Design actually involves. With respect to any theory, students are encouraged to keep an open mind. The school leaves the discussion of Origins of Life to individual students and their families. As a Standards-driven district, class instruction focuses upon preparing students to achieve proficiency on Standards-based assessments.⁴

This statement by the School Board was intended to require biology teachers to present intelligent design as an alternative to the scientific theory of evolution. The intelligent design idea stresses that certain features of life and the universe are so complex that they had to be the product of a master intellect who is an intelligent, super-natural designer. Proponents of this idea maintain that cell structures, such as flagella, are too irreducibly complex to have *evolved*. So an intelligent designer had to be behind this.

On the surface it would appear that the intelligent design theory is another scientifically proven theory on par with Darwin’s 150-year-old theory of evolution. The question then becomes, “Why shouldn’t students in science class be given the opportunity to look at both theories and decide for themselves? After all, isn’t this the democratic American way?” But let’s look more deeply here. A key question to consider is, “What is a *theory* in the scientific arena?” Bill Allen, editor for National Geographic magazine states:

When scientists say “theory” they mean a statement based on observation or experimentation that explains facets of the observable world so well that it becomes accepted as fact. They do not mean an idea created out of thin air, nor do they mean an unsubstantiated belief.⁵

Francisco Ayala delineates this point further in his book *Darwin and Intelligent Design*:

When scientists talk about the “theory” of evolution, they use the word differently from how people use it in ordinary speech. In every

day speech, *theory* often means *guess* or *hunch*, as in “I have a theory as to why there were so many hurricanes in the year 2005.” In science, however, a *theory* is a well-substantiated explanation of some aspect of the natural world that incorporates observations, facts, laws, inferences and tested hypotheses.⁶

In response to the Intelligent Design argument, Margaret Gray Towne, in her book *Honest to Genesis*, asks this question:

[W]hy do disease causing microbes, imperfect eyesight, or non-functional wisdom teeth exist? Are some things designed and others not? Why have most organisms which have ever lived gone extinct? Is that poor design? Could the designer work through evolutionary mechanisms? Why does a designer allow predation, infant mortality, volcanoes, earthquakes, death? Those adhering to the intelligent design position have not as yet produced experimental, peer-reviewed data which support their point. Since they wish to have it incorporated into public school curricula, most of the leaders of this movement are careful not to identify the designer, but some authors have asserted that the Intelligent Designer is indeed the God of the Bible. They explain that pain and death are the result of human error, sin, and are not to be blamed on the designer. This is a *theological* position, not a *scientific* one.⁷

Recognizing the difference between scientific theory and the idea of Intelligent Design, the Dover high school science teachers refused to read the school board’s statement. They countered that the mandated statement amounted to teaching the Intelligent Design approach, which is inherently philosophical and not scientific. One teacher noted: “Kids are smart enough to understand what Intelligent Design means. The first question they will ask is ‘Well, who is the designer? Do you mean God?’”⁸

A key question in this debate is a scientific one, namely, is intelligent design a recognized field of science, with provable hypotheses, trials, collected data, etc? Judge John E. Jones III wrote in the *Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School District* decision of December 20, 2005: “Although proponents of Intelligent Design occasionally suggest that the designer could be a space alien or a time-traveling cell biologist, no serious alternative to God as a designer has been proposed by the Intelligent Design movement.”⁹

From my readings, even the writings of key proponents do not agree as to the provability of Intelligent Design as a scientific theory. Perhaps some-

day it will be, but until that time the *philosophy* of Intelligent Design should not be taught in *science* class.

Can this issue be taught in public school? Yes. But where does it belong? I would suggest in a comparative religion class on the “Origins of Life” or “Philosophies of the Beginning of Life” or in a “History of Science” class. As of yet, I do not believe it offers adequate scientific proof on the beginnings of life such that it should be included in the science classroom. But a fact to remember is that, wherever it is taught, Intelligent Design cannot be presented as “warmed over” creationism.

From my biblical and theological studies, I would submit the following that Genesis 1-2 were not written as a scientific text book for the twenty-first century. This statement was made by my Old Testament Professor Jacob Myers at this seminary and it came to my mind the night that I stood before the Dover Board at that infamous school board meeting. My file notes verified its authenticity some fifty years later. Genesis 1 and 2 were, and still are, beautiful and inspirational Judeo-Christian faith statements about the beginnings of life. They are not stories that were carved on stone by a primeval short-hand secretary who was recording creation as it happened. They are faith stories handed down through oral tradition expressing beliefs about the origin of life. This early Israelite faith statement is similar to other creation stories of other cultures in the early period of primeval history. Accepting this does not negate a creator God nor make Genesis less authoritative as a theological, faith statement. The creation stories of the Bible are typical of Jewish stories in the parable form of the teachings of Jesus. They are taught to illustrate a truth. The Talmud is full of stories which illustrate truths. The question in prime matters of religion and faith is not “Is the story true?” but rather “What truth does the story convey?” In my view, some well-meaning persons of faith today make idolatry out of whether the creation story is true and miss the deeper understanding of the truth the story is telling. That truth, in my mind, concerns the vastness of God and the unending universe, as I read it in Isa 55:9, “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts*” (NRSV).

There are two creation stories in Genesis (1:1-2:3 and Genesis 2:4ff). One begins with progression and *evolves* toward humanity. The second begins with the creation of Adam and Eve and tells the story of the first human beings. In my study of this second story of creation in Genesis, I came across a profound perspective by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks who indicates that “*the Creator made creation creative* The God who chose to create our universe is one who delights in creativity. A universe in which life evolves is more

creative than one in which life forms never change.”¹⁰ He goes on to explain: “God ... in Genesis 2 is a gardener, not a mechanic, one who plants systems that grow. The constantly evolving, ever changing nature of life revealed by biology after Darwin fits the theological vision far more than did the controlled, predictable, mechanical universe of eighteenth century science.”¹¹

Religion and science need not be pitted against each other in this debate! Writing in *Christian Century* magazine of December 27, 2005, Nancy Murphy, ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and retired professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA says:

The intelligent design movement has the unfortunate effect of promoting the view that science and Christian teaching are incompatible ... Christians have traditionally understood God to act in at least two ways: by performing special acts (special providence, signs, miracles) and by constantly upholding all natural processes. The ID movement assumes that God works only in the first way. Therefore, to show that God has acted, the ID movement believes one has to identify an event in which no natural process is involved. This is their point in trying to argue that particular events in the evolutionary process cannot be explained scientifically.”¹²

The issue, in my opinion, is that religion and science are being pitted against each other needlessly. Again, quoting Margaret Gray Towne: “There is no conflict between science and religion, nor between evolutionary theory and the profound theology of Genesis. The conflict is between modern science and the literal pseudo-science of Genesis.”¹³

Peters and Hewlett say it best in their book *Evolution from Creation to New Creation*, where they admit that there is a battle over evolution, but they ask this:

[I]s it a battle between science and faith? In the popular notion, the answer may seem to be yes. But we have a different answer: no. There is not a battle between science and faith. Evolutionary biology can be embraced both by persons of faith in God and by those who repudiate belief in God.¹⁴

They go on to say what I observed was all too evident in the Dover situation:

It is a tragedy that science educators in our public schools, parochial schools and Christian Day schools should find themselves treading on egg shells when treating the subject matter of evolutionary biology.

There is so much to learn about God’s fascinating world with all of its intricacies and dramas and mysteries; and how sad it is that the war-zone atmosphere of our classrooms risks snuffing out curiosity before it can be born.¹⁵

Kenneth R. Miller, a professor of Biology at Brown University, who is Roman Catholic and an opponent of Intelligent Design, is the author of the current biology text being used in the Dover Area School District. He states: “I think there is a God and that God is the creator of the universe. But the God of the intelligent design movement is way too small.”¹⁶

Is it possible that the God we worship is big enough to embrace all aspects of this debate? I believe so! The God of our faith is a God of incarnation, transformation, and evolvment. Life is brought forth from death. Creation evolves to new creation. God is full of surprises and can create not according to how our limited minds can think, but according to the witness of the galaxies, the universe, and of humanity itself. Christians can study the principle of evolution without going against their belief in a creator God. Evolution is not a belief system! In this regard, perhaps Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says it best:

Science is not religion; religion is not science. Each has its own logic, its own way of asking questions and searching for the answers. The way of testing a scientific hypothesis is to do science, not read Scripture. The way of testing religion is to do religion – to ask, in total honesty and full understanding, is this really what God wants of us? It is not to make assertions about the truth or falsity of some scientific theory.¹⁷

Church and State

Though literalist views of biblical interpretation that pit science against the creation story were at the heart of the debate in the Dover Area School District, another issue was opened when eleven members of the community filed a law suit against the District in Federal court. Should any particular theological belief be imposed by the DASD school board upon persons who cannot conscientiously accept or teach those beliefs as part of the science curriculum? This was the issue that concerned the plaintiffs who brought the lawsuit. Further, the Dover High School science teachers felt caught. They knew and upheld the U.S. Supreme Court decision of 1987 (*Edwards vs Aguillard*) which outlawed the teaching of creationism, and they believed that intelligent design was a mask for a new form of creationism. The teachers believed that the statement of the school board was in opposition to “their ethical obligation and solemn

responsibility to the truth.” They further wrote that “they could not knowingly give out information to students that they knew to be false.”¹⁸

The science faculty, along with their state union representative, wrote a letter to the school board stating:

Intelligent Design is not science. Intelligent Design is not biology. Intelligent Design is not an accepted scientific theory. I believe that if I as the classroom teacher read the required statement, my students will inevitably (and understandably) believe that Intelligent Design is a valid scientific theory, perhaps on par with the theory of evolution. That is not true. To refer the students to *Of Pandas and People* as if it is a scientific resource breaches my ethical obligation to provide them with scientific knowledge that is supported by recognized scientific proof or theory.¹⁹

This statement by the Dover science teachers was summed up by the above-named Dr. Kenneth Miller, co-author of the text book that was at the heart of the controversy. At the trial, Miller confessed his awful fear that “intelligent design could force students to choose between faith and science, that they would abandon curiosity because it makes them question their religion. Or, opting for science, they would turn their back on God.”²⁰

The above principle was brought home to me when at one of my presentations at a university several students stuck around afterward to talk with me. I could tell that they were troubled. One young woman asked me if I, as a minister, thought that she was going to hell. Before I responded I wanted to know the context of her inquiry. She then shared that she was afraid to take a biology course because her pastor, youth pastor, and parents all told her that if she studied evolution in biology she would go to hell. Other students with her confirmed her fears. With tears, she asked me again, “Do you think I am going to hell if I study biology?” My response was that it was not mine, nor anyone else’s, for that matter, to judge her motives, much less her educational and vocational choices in such a manner. I told her that education and faith were issues that she needed to define for herself.

During the subsequent trial it became clear that the bedrock issue in Dover was the view of several school board members, who attended the same church, that a radically different view of education in Dover, and the nation, was needed. This viewpoint was based on a literalist understanding of the creation story in Genesis and on an insistence by those same board members that there is no separation of church and state.

In the Court’s conclusion, as rendered in the opinion of Judge John E. Jones III, three opinions were given:

1. ID is not science and it cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents.
2. The presupposition that evolutionary theory is antithetical to a belief in the existence of a supreme being, and to religion in general, is utterly false.
3. The citizens of the Dover area were poorly served by the members of the Board who voted for the ID policy. It is ironic that several of these individuals who so staunchly and proudly touted their religious convictions in public, would time and again lie to cover their tracks and disguise the real purpose behind the ID policy.²¹

The Judge further stated:

The breath-taking inanity of the board’s decision is evident when considered against the factual backdrop which has now been fully revealed through this trial. The students, parents, and teachers of the Dover Area School District deserved better than to be dragged into the legal maelstrom, with its resulting utter waste of monetary and personal resources.²²

Leadership

Good leadership does not happen in a vacuum. The board of any organization is not individual members making private decisions, nor being influenced privately by outside forces. A board can only *act* as a board when it meets to do the board’s work. An effective board is always a listening board. It listens to its constituency as well as to its own leadership. A board can only be effective when all of its leaders model openness and respect for other viewpoints.

In the Dover situation the question has to be asked: how could the school board have led in a servant role? I believe the current culture wars over various political and religious issues may tempt us to find solutions that are popular or adhere to certain political perspectives on the right or left of any issue. An effective board will bend to neither, but will seek to find solutions that neither break the law nor adhere to one perspective. Pitting people against each other to compete rather than cooperate is not a school

board's purpose. Rather, their responsibility to the public trust is to hear all sides of issues from groups with various viewpoints, and then come to a consensus of what is best for a specific situation. In my opinion, this did not happen at Dover Area School District.

The intelligent design issue and the subsequent lawsuit engendered interaction among the disciplines of science, politics, theology, and public education. In doing so, people learned that there were persons on both sides of the issue in all those disciplines. At its worst we experienced the hierarchal leadership of a misguided school board that was dedicated to one theological perspective. Through an ill-conceived and poorly thought-out plan, this school board actually placed its science teachers and administrators in a position of disobedience either to the U.S. Supreme Court or the local board policy – not a good position for classroom teachers or administrators.

We also observed divisions among congregational membership on the issue. There were places of worship where pastors worked diligently to encourage freedom of thought and expression from both perspectives while striving for harmony in the community beyond the walls of the church. Nevertheless, there were also congregations that promoted Intelligent Design and threatened to boycott businesses whose owners vocally gave support to the teaching of evolution.

I think, however, that the political process was strengthened in Dover when a bi-partisan group emerged that was dedicated to:

- Fiscal responsibility
- Quality education
- Open communication
- Critical thinking and academic freedom
- Relationship building

This group, known as *Dover CARES* (an acronym for *Citizens Actively Reviewing Educational Strategies*), was a diverse group. Members held differing viewpoints on theological positions, including the question of evolution, but they sought to identify issues and create venues for community dialogue and discussion. They held press conferences, public meetings, barbecues, picnics, and volunteered time to help others in the community build a Habitat for Humanity house. But this diverse group also believed that a new school board was essential to bring stability to the community and the school district. They supported eight candidates, four Democrats and four Republicans – one of them a science teacher. These eight were committed to good governance, the separation of church and state, and most importantly,

good public education. All of the community efforts of Dover CARES, along with door-to-door campaigning by the candidates, made it possible to unseat the eight openings on Dover's nine-member school board, which took place before a decision on the lawsuit was rendered.

As stated earlier, the court case was decided in favor of the plaintiffs and the newly elected board did not appeal the decision of Judge John E. Jones III. The leadership of Dover CARES in the 2006 election proved that when people work together with respect for each other and have a carefully planned process, they *can* make a difference. This can also be true for the religious and scientific disciplines. There is a great need in local communities for people of science and faith – sometimes one and the same – to hold forums educating parents, students, and community leaders about evolution and faith perspectives.

Conclusion

Since that initial invitation by my son to participate in that infamous school board meeting, here are some of my learnings:

- Well-meaning Christians can be nasty to each other!
- It is difficult to dialogue with a literalist.
- A local school board is no place for members either to promote personal religious beliefs or to intimidate others.
- Citizens *can* creatively and effectively unite for better government (e.g., Dover CARES).
- The legal system does seek justice.
- Theological and educational leadership needs to recognize the increasing literalistic Christian perspective among parents, students and some faculty members in many communities.
- Honest biblical interpretation, as well as good hermeneutics and solid exegesis, are essential in addressing public issues from a theological perspective.
- There is a need to broaden congregational understanding about the global community, *we/they* thinking, and views that foster religion *and* science, rather than religion *versus* science. Pastors need to be leaders on these discussions.
- Pastors are sometimes reluctant to get involved in public issues because of potential conflict in their congregation and the community.
- Congregational biblical studies should promote critical thinking as well as spiritual understanding.

A hopeful retrospective for me from the past decade has led me to the following conclusions:

- The 2006 Dover situation was a harbinger of things to come in the 2016 political arena. We must continue to search for ways to make bi-partisanship work.
- Clergy and laity from another era of learning about science and theology can be introduced to new avenues of thinking on these subjects.
- Congregations, institutions of higher education, and seminaries can work collaboratively in bringing religion and science into dialogue.
- The wider church, including denominations and judicatories, are becoming aware of ethical issues related to new and current scientific discoveries.
- New resources are being developed and marketed on the relationship between religion and science.
- Conferences like this one are effective ways to discuss this subject positively.

In one of my classes several years ago I had a student develop in her local church a Youth/Young Adult/Older Adult Sunday School Class on Science and Faith. She invited different persons from differing scientific backgrounds to come in and speak to the class. In addition, she invited persons of different faith perspectives to share their understandings of Science and Faith. There were doctors, nurses, biologists, chemists, physicists, geologists, pastors, and seminary and college professors who made presentations and enabled dialogue with the class over a thirteen-week period. When it was over she did an evaluation of the experience. A large majority of the class said that while they did not agree with everything that they heard, they learned a great deal about the role that science and faith played in the professions, in the lives of the presenters, and in the environment.

The Dover situation of a decade ago should not be seen simply as a win/lose for the parties involved. It was and is bigger than that! A key lesson is that the natural world is part of the created order. It cannot be reduced to “old understandings” in either theology or science. Rather, this era is calling for a new theology of creation that enables us to recognize the sanctity of the environment and the deepening relationship between theology and science. In their latest book entitled *Creation*, Keel and Schroer say it best: “There needs to be a deepening continuation of the dialogue between

theology and science, which ... involves the most recent developments in genetics, neurology and astronomy.”²³ Can we do any less than become active leaders and teachers in promoting and continuing this dialogue? This is the hopeful retrospective of lessons learned from Dover.

Notes

- 1 Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2008) 10ff.
- 2 Edward Humes, *Monkey Girl* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2006) 43ff.
- 3 Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, *Wikipedia.org*.
- 4 *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, 400 F. Supp. 2d 707 (M.D. Pa. 2005) 1-2.
- 5 *National Geographic*, November 2004.
- 6 Francisco Ayala, *Darwin and Intelligent Design* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) 73.
- 7 Margaret Gray Towne, *Honest to Genesis: A Biblical and Scientific Challenge to Creationism* (Frederick, MD: Publish America, 2003) 95. Italics added.
- 8 R. Eshbach, quoted from New York Times, January 16, 2005.
- 9 *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, 400 F. Supp. 2d 707 (M.D. Pa. 2005) 25.
- 10 Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion and the Search for Meaning* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2011) 216.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Nancey Murphy, *Christian Century* (December 27, 2005) 22-24.
- 13 Margaret Gray Towne, *Honest to Genesis: A Biblical and Scientific Challenge to Creationism* (Frederick, MD: Publish America, 2003) 96-97.
- 14 Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, *Evolution From Creation to New Creation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004) 33.
- 15 Ibid., 33.
- 16 Kenneth Miller, from *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 30, 2005.
- 17 Sacks, *The Great Partnership*, 214.
- 18 Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* (New York, NY, The New Press, 2008) 81.
- 19 Ibid., 81-82.
- 20 Ibid., 118.
- 21 *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, 400 F. Supp. 2d 707 (M.D. Pa. 2005) 136-137.
- 22 Ibid., 138.
- 23 Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer, *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of Ancient Near East* (trans. Peter T. Daniels; Warsaw, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015) 19.

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God, Evolution, and Intelligent Design: A Vision for the Future

Joseph W. Shane

[Gettysburg Seminary 2016 Spring Academy] It is with a profound sense of honor and gratitude that I join you today to participate in the Spring Academy. I congratulate Gettysburg Seminary for establishing the Science for Seminaries program in partnership with the American Association for the Advance of Science (AAAS). This is, without question, a necessary endeavor, and I trust that you will embrace the opportunities presented to you.

My name is Joe, and I am an Associate Professor of Chemistry and Science Education at Shippensburg University, known in this region as Ship. Like many state schools, Ship began as a teachers' college or normal school, and this continues to be a point of emphasis on our campus.

In addition to teaching chemistry and currently serving as department chair, one of my primary responsibilities is to help prepare future middle school and high school science teachers to take their personal knowledge of biology, chemistry, physics, and earth and space science and transform it into meaningful lessons for adolescents. This involves not only the contemporary content of these various scientific disciplines but also the methods of scientific inquiry and the cultural and historical contexts within which scientific theories are proposed, further developed, and in some cases discarded.

Ten years ago when I continued my career at Ship, I rarely thought about science and religion in any kind of relational way. In fact, I can only recall two moments from my high school teaching days where this even came up. In one instance, after a lesson on drawing molecular structures, a student said to me, "You can't say all of that was a mistake." I don't recall ever describing molecules as mistakes. In another case, a friend of mine who taught social studies was covering the industrial and scientific revolu-

tion. During lunch, he noted how he talked about Darwin and evolution and told the students it was "just a theory." I don't recall giving this a second thought. If I had any position on science and religion, it was probably a naïve and misplaced sense of fairness in that all "sides" should be considered.

As some of you in this room know, all of this changed abruptly for me in 2005, the year of the *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School Board* (DASB) trial which Dr. Eshbach [who gave a retrospective about the Kitzmiller trial preceding my presentation] has described. Since then, understanding interactions between science and religion has become a centerpiece of my professional life and a vital part of my Christian faith. Over the past several years, I have taught short courses at various churches in the region, hosted an Annual Forum on Science and Religion at Ship, and I taught an honors seminar on science and religion last spring based largely on the pioneering work of Ian Barbour (1997), who is generally credited with establishing science-religion interactions as an historical sub-discipline.

I was struggling to bring some structure to this talk over the past several weeks and probably muttering around the house. My wife said that I should simply tell my story. So, Molly [my wife], thanks for that, and I am, almost entirely, shunning my comfort zone of electronic slides and bulleted lists (apologies to those that have done this). To give you some thoughts on and visions for God, Evolution, and Intelligent Design, I have opted for about one decade's worth of autobiography with some take-home messages for your consideration. If you want more detail and references, please see the paper [reference provided following transcript] that I recently published with some colleagues of mine in science teacher education.

The broad message will likely be the same that you have heard and will continue to hear, namely, the crucial roles that seminaries and clergy play in crossing boundaries and in responsibly blurring the lines between increasingly complex and awe-inspiring scientific understandings of the natural world with religious faith.

Called Out by a Student

One of my students in my first year at Ship was getting his Master's degree in biology, and he had done some research with evolutionary theory as an undergraduate. He came to my office for many hours throughout the semester to discuss the Dover case, and he was obviously excited about it. I have to admit that I wasn't following the trial very closely and I think I made some vague references to the Scopes "monkey" trial and other court cases (Larson, 2002). Well, he was unimpressed with my lack of interest

and understanding and eventually said, “Dr. Shane, you are not taking this seriously, and you need to.” As you might imagine, when a student says something like this, it gets your attention. This was indeed one of the powerful “corner turning” moments that brings me here today.

I followed the trial and read many of the same newspapers and magazines that many of you may have read, including the brilliant piece in *The New Yorker* (Talbot, 2005) written just after the trial concluded. I read Judge Jones’ decision (National Center for Science Education, 2013), and I was delighted that I could actually follow the legalese. I highly recommend reading it cover to cover. It is beautifully written, and the *Kitzmilller* trial is often referred to as “Scopes II” for its significance.

My demeanor, however, quickly switched to outrage. Not at Judge Jones or his decision, but outrage at the school board members who pressured Dover High School’s science teachers to include the clearly unscientific idea of intelligent design in their curriculum. Outrage at the Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture (1998) who, by their own admission, seek to use intelligent design to discredit evolution and as a wedge to separate society from what they believe to be an inherently materialistic worldview promoted by contemporary science. And outrage at fellow chemist, Michael Behe from Lehigh University, who suggests that aspects of nature are too complex, irreducibly complex in his words, to be explained by naturalistic causes.

I could easily continue my retrospective rant, but after Dr. Eshbach’s presentation we know how this chapter of the story ends. Judge Jones recognized intelligent design as wholly unscientific and linked it to its protean ancestors, creation science and biblical creationism.

Warren, I don’t know if you remember the first time we met. I think it was at a Christmas party at your house just after the trial ended, but I think before the decision was issued. I didn’t want to spoil the holiday mood, so I held off on an intense conversation. We did touch base as Molly and I were leaving, and I said something like, “After all of the scientific, legal, and political arguments are laid to rest, all they [advocates for intelligent design] have left is lies, cheating, and deceit.” I recall you saying something like, “And break the law, and these are people who call themselves Christian.”

So, my first “take home” message is simply this. Vigilance. It is not over after Dover and these issues still have the potential to divide communities, church congregations, and even families. Recognize over 100 years of efforts to undermine, exclude, or de-emphasize the teaching of evolution in public schools (Larson, 2002; Principe, 2006). Outright bans existed in several states in the early 1900’s leading to one of the most famous science-religion case studies in history, the *Scopes* trial. It was not until the mid-1960’s that

these statewide bans were overturned by the United States Supreme Court following the courageous efforts of Susan Epperson, who insisted on teaching evolution in an Arkansas classroom. This was also the same period that saw the rise of creation science and its main proponent, Dr. Henry Morris. Dr. Morris, an accomplished civil engineer (he was department chair at Virginia Tech), suggested that the scientific evidence supported the flood narratives in Genesis. He founded the Institute for Creation Research which still exists to this day (and I think is run by the late Dr. Morris’ son) and produces curriculum materials that are popular in churches and home school organizations. You might know of a protégé of Dr. Morris, Mr. Ken Ham, who founded Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. He takes the rather extreme view of a Young Earth Creationist in supporting biblical literalism as evidence for an earth that is thousands, and not billions, of years old. If you look on the shelves of enough church libraries, you will likely see materials from these organizations.

In a technical sense, Judge Jones’ decision only applies to the Middle District of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The ripple effects were profound as many states and school districts reviewed their science standards and curriculum to remove any vestiges of creationism, creation science, and intelligent design. As you might imagine, groups such as the Discovery Institute quickly attacked Judge Jones’ decision and shifted legal and political tactics. Actually, they reverted to an old strategy, namely an “academic freedom” argument where teachers should be able to bring in so-called alternatives to evolution into the classroom. There have been numerous (over 60 I think) attempts to introduce boilerplate legislation from the Discovery Institute, including an effort in 2011 led by Pennsylvania Representative Steve Bloom, who is actually my local representative in Carlisle.

I urge you to remain vigilant and recognize the ongoing efforts of anti-evolution organizations (National Center for Science Education, 2013). By any measures, they have been quite effective domestically and, in some cases, internationally. Their speakers, writings, and broadcasts over Christian radio, television, and internet sites are quite common, and this was an entire subculture of which I was unaware until ten years ago. It took some years thereafter for me to understand the extent to which opposition to evolution was woven into the fabric of American culture.

A World I Did Not See

The “Dover” trial also pointed out to me how little I knew about evolution. Perhaps this is not surprising since secondary school textbooks largely

omitted evolution following the *Scopes* trial, and it was not until the 1960's and 1970's that Darwin made a comeback of sorts (Larson, 2002). I recall (insofar as I can recall what I was thinking as a fifteen year old) that my ninth-grade biology teacher, Mr. Mandigo, at Indiana Junior High School in Indiana, PA, did not talk much about evolution. Perhaps he was a product of his time and of an active effort by textbook publishers not to offend state boards of education and local school districts in a very competitive market.

As for today's circumstances, many of the statistics are familiar to you. On a good day, about half of the American population accepts the empirical evidence for evolution, and among other developed countries we rank near the bottom. Some evidence exists that a *majority* of biology and life science teachers simply avoid teaching evolution for fear of community backlash or, in some cases, for teaching something that they feel is inconsistent with their personal religious faith. For those of you who will continue your ministry in the United States, I suggest that this is important information for you to know.

I also hope and assume that some scientific training will accompany your seminary studies, and we certainly don't have the time today for a comprehensive treatment of evolutionary theory. For now, it may suffice to say that Darwin's main points that he finally published in the mid-1800's – common ancestry, descent with modification, and natural selection – continue to be refined and expanded. It is worth noting that his ideas gained widespread acceptance within the scientific community during his lifetime, which is a rare occurrence in the history of science.

Be patient. It will require considerable effort on your part if you have never studied these topics before. Evolutionary thinking requires you to consider time on the order of millions and billions of years and of matter and life beyond individual organisms and species. Even for me as a chemist, I do not look at the Periodic Table of the Elements in the same way, and the next time I teach a liberal arts survey course, I will spend some time walking the elements back in time to their cosmological origins.

I urge you to do the same. There are so many inroads into evolutionary theory: genetics, embryology, cognitive neuroscience, comparative anatomy, botany, medicine, biochemistry, cosmology. *It is a powerful thing – I have seen it many times – when those who are called and trained into ministry are conversant in science.* For me and countless others, when you have understood and perhaps made your peace with the legacy and ongoing influence of Charles Darwin, you may indeed see the world differently. You may find yourself looking out into the world and even at your own body as an historical record and say “of course!”

Even a rudimentary understanding of evolution will allow you to respond to common anti-evolution strategies in thoughtful ways: evolution means “everything” is random and without purpose; evolution is just one of many competing theories in the scientific community (I assure you it is not); evolution is actually a worldview or even a religion of sorts; evolution is “just a theory”, suggesting that it is a guess or a hunch; or the fact that there are unanswered questions or “gaps” in our understanding of the mechanisms of evolution means that it is flawed science, a theory in crisis, or, as an audience member stated at a recent presentation that I hosted: “there are chinks the armor.”

It will also enable you to see through the concerted and well-funded efforts of anti-evolution organizations. None offer viable alternatives to evolutionary science and they are not, in spite of the polished veneer, science at all. They are more aptly labeled, in my view, as rather effective, and disingenuous, public relations campaigns and Trojan Horse legal strategies designed to smuggle religious ideas into public schools and institutions. I occasionally consider calling these efforts propaganda, but I'm not sure that this fits the definition. Creation science and intelligent design (more appropriately named intelligent design creationism) remain pervasive in our culture in spite of the legal rulings that I outlined previously.

This is a reality for which you should be prepared and for which an abundance of ideas and resources are available to you. There is no shortage of thoughtful books and curriculum materials. In a broad sense, study and make your peace with Darwin's ideas, and seek to be a science-religion peacemaker in your work. Perhaps, in the end, you will express a similar, but contemporary, sentiment to Darwin as he famously noted in the conclusion of *The Origin of Species*:

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.

“What Should I do When you Tell me a Day isn't a Day?”

Molly and I had the good fortune of visiting Darwin's home, Down House, in Kent last summer. It's difficult to imagine a more important historical site for science-religion interactions, and I highly recommend visiting. Prior to this visit, I did not have an appreciation for how long it took Darwin to formulate his ideas. I had assumed that following his Galapagos voyage on the

Beagle, it was a relatively short period upon his return to England that he had his “a-ha!” moments. It took decades, however, and Down House was in many ways a laboratory where he and his family conducted experiments in a variety of gardens and meadows. The grounds are beautifully preserved, and it was humbling to walk on the same paths where he exercised and played with his children. For me, a particularly powerful moment was when a museum guide showed me a closet that held sports equipment. Darwin kept a draft of *The Origin of Species* here for nearly fourteen years along with a note and funds to publish the book in case he died.

As many of you might now, he did not publish his work right away since he fully understood the potential religious repercussions. Up to that time, there was not a comprehensive, empirical scientific explanation for the natural world at the level and depth of speciation via natural selection and descent with modification. He knew that some would interpret his ideas as pushing God away, diminishing God’s influence, or demoting the status of human beings. He was particularly concerned for how his wife, Emma, would react.

As I noted before, Darwin’s ideas were quickly embraced by the scientific community, and his basic tenets continue to be refined. I’ve heard some historians and philosophers refer to evolution as the best example of a scientific theory because of its explanatory power and ongoing relevance in opening new lines of inquiry. Perhaps the fact that Darwin is buried in Westminster Abbey with Isaac Newton is a testament to his legacy. Both changed how we view the world forever.

Reactions among religious communities, however, were quite mixed as you might already understand. Some did then, as some do now, use evolution to justify a strictly materialistic or atheistic worldview. Dr. Richard Dawkins, a towering figure in science and self-identified militant atheist, famously declared in his book *The Blind Watchmaker* that “Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”

Others then, as now, viewed evolution as God’s mechanism for interacting with the world. This is classic *theistic evolution*, which has a more contemporary version called *evolutionary creation*, a centerpiece of the Biologos Foundation. The founder of the Biologos Foundation and current head of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Francis Collins, refers to DNA as the language of God. Entire shelves can be filled with books about how to reconcile and distinguish scientific and religious perspectives of the natural world. Much of this, in my view, comes down to the age-old and necessary tension between faith and reason, and what better group to cross these boundaries than you.

Many seminaries in Europe and the United States began, as you are doing now, to set to work on reconciling Darwin’s ideas and the latest sci-

entific revolution with their Christian faith. Some, regrettably, continue to assert and to teach that modern science, and evolution in particular, are anathema to Christianity, and it took me a while to recognize why this seemed to be almost an entirely American phenomenon.

I am not sure about what training you will receive in American religious history as part of your education here, but I suspect you will learn about the rise and persistence of Christian Fundamentalism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The basic tenets of Fundamentalism – biblical literalism, scriptural inerrancy, and dispensational millenarianism – are probably familiar to you as they remain quite common. The third tenet refers to the belief that time is divided into seven ages, or dispensations, and that we are currently in the sixth age. You may also know that Fundamentalism was largely a backlash against rapid changes to society including industrialization, urbanization, immigration (there was quite a bit of anti-Irish Catholic sentiment at during this period), publicly funded education, and the use of textual criticism to study and interpret scripture.

What I did not understand until recently was the central role that opposition to evolution played, and I assert continues to play, in the Fundamentalist movement. So, my take-home messages here are twofold; a book to add to your reading list and one of my favorite science-religion sound-bites.

Historian George Marsden’s (2006) book *Fundamentalism and American Culture* gave me another one of those “corner turning” moments, especially with the following excerpt:

The meteoric rise of the anti-evolution issue – which was closely connected with the World War I notion of saving civilization from German theology and its superman philosophy – was swiftly transforming the character of the fundamentalist movement, particularly in its premillennialist branch, which found that a social and political question was now virtually its first concern. This transformation was involved with an immense surge in popularity; the anti-evolution movement was becoming a national fad. Both the premillennial movement and denominational fundamentalism had been confined mostly to Northern states, but anti-evolution swept through the South and found new constituencies in rural areas everywhere. Many people with little or no interest in fundamentalism’s doctrinal concerns were drawn into the campaign to keep Darwinism out of America’s schools.

This paragraph stopped me in my tracks and made me wonder what I had gotten myself into. So, I urge you not to underestimate opposition to

evolution. For many, attacking the science and perceived cultural implications of evolution and embracing the latest anti-evolution strategy are, quite precisely, articles of religious faith.

In the few instances where I have rather hostile responses to my presentations, I hear the echoes of Fundamentalism. In one case, the pastor gave me some advance warning that one of the congregation members was a Young Earth Creationist who home schooled his children using curriculum materials from Answers in Genesis. He, his wife, and two boys attended the first two of the three classes I taught on Sunday evenings. They sat in the front pew and seemed to be quite attentive. For the final class, the father was the only one who showed up and when the final question-and-answer period began, he immediately exclaimed, “What should I do when you tell me a day isn’t a day?” I was prepared to respond as this was not my first time to this particular rodeo, but I did not have to. The pastor and several other members of the congregation patiently addressed and empathized with his concerns and offered other explanations, such as the word “day” as a metaphor for epochs of time. It was a rather touching scene to be honest.

I have since learned to pre-empt some of these comments and I happily “steal” what is now one of my favorite phrases that captures the necessary grappling we all do with faith and reason. A church in my home town had a grant from The Templeton Foundation to address science-religion issues. The main idea was to teach good science and good biblical scholarship and exegesis in concert in their Christian education at all levels for a year. So, I pass that along as an additional piece of advice to you. They brought in a series of speakers, including professors from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. I attended one of the weekend events, which was an entire weekend seminar on the first two chapters of Genesis. The speaker focused more on the history and translations of the texts rather than on any particular science-religion implications. So, I asked him to what he attributed much of the antagonism between science and religion, particularly in regard to these stories of origin. I could tell that the question annoyed him a bit. Perhaps he was tired of answering it. He quickly and succinctly responded that the main problem is confusing the word *truth* with the word *fact*. In other words, for some, for something to be true it must be a fact. Brilliant.

I use this quote in nearly every science-religion class that I teach in churches. So, in addition to the soundbite, I urge you to carve out spaces for these conversations in worship, in Sunday School classrooms, and in meetings with your congregation members. Pay particular attention to your youth, since they may be asking the challenging questions as they learn increasingly more sophisticated science in school. Some youth may indeed

be able to lead the way, because the science may be clearer to them. In my view, these are some of the spaces where these conversations *must* take place.

“*This Class Helped me to be Less of a ‘Jerk’*”

I will end my autobiographical remarks today by describing some experiences I had teaching the honors seminar that I mentioned, as well as a comment a student made to a guest speaker. In the Spring of 2015, I was invited by the director of the Honors Program at Ship to teach a seminar course. It was a genuine delight, and I had twelve students sign up. As far as I could tell, the class was split into three groups of four, from a religious standpoint. Four were still quite active members of their Christian churches. Four had been involved with churches previously, but were not currently active in their faith. Four were quite committed and reasoned atheists. An interesting mix to be sure, and I do not recall one instance of disrespect or hostility throughout the semester. I thought at least I would upset somebody.

Our primary text was one of Ian Barbour’s books, and I wonder if we would even be here today if not for his efforts during his time as a professor of philosophy and physics at Carleton College. You may be familiar with his now famous analytical framework for thinking about the relationship between science and religion. The most well-known position is perhaps the *warfare* thesis that suggests that science and religion stand in philosophical and methodological opposition and that progress in one diminishes the other. The *independence* thesis suggest that science and religion are simply too different epistemological domains that should not interact. Finally, the *harmony* approach asserts that there is no inherent conflict between science and religion and that areas of common ground can and must be found. This is the most basic of summaries, and there is much more nuance to this framework. My students and I found this to be a useful beginning to understand how science and religion interacted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and again in the twentieth century with discoveries in astronomy, biology, and physics. The book includes the classic science-religion stories of Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin, classical-to-quantum physics, and the discovery of background microwave radiation as evidence of a “Big Bang” beginning to the universe. So, Barbour is truly mandatory reading, and there are plenty of “Barbour lite” resources out there that might be more appropriate for Sunday School and other facets of Christian education. The Biologos Foundation, for example, generally seems to support the *harmony* position and is sympathetic to a Christian worldview.

I found Barbour’s work to be quite helpful and reassuring once I decided to move beyond evolution and not to fixate on the “Dover”

trial. His framework was also useful for class discussions since it gave us a vocabulary for thinking about, and for expressing personal beliefs about, science-religion interactions. I had thought that the book would guide the class for the entire semester, but I realized that I was going to run out of material about half to two-thirds of the way through. Based on students' and my interests we added discussions of Christian Fundamentalism, more about the *Kitzmiller* trial (Lauri Lebo, a reporter who covered the trial, was our science-religion forum speaker that semester), the eugenics movement in the United States and other aspects of Social Darwinism, and science-religion viewpoints from other religions where we used materials from the Zygon Center. All in all, it was a challenging and worthwhile course to teach, and I look forward to doing it again.

Towards the end of the semester, I invited a colleague of mine, Dr. David Long (2011, 2012), as a guest speaker. As a sociologist, he has written quite a bit about the resistance to evolution among faith communities. He also has an excellent ethnography about a college campus that, based on the demographics, resembles Ship. He did a one-year study about how students were reacting to evolution on the campus. Among some of his more powerful conclusions were the fears that some students had about evolution. For some, they feared that, by studying and considering evolution, they risked their family, social, and church relationships. There was even an active effort by the assistant pastor to undermine what was being taught in the science building, which was across the road from the campus ministry center. Just like Ship. David spent about half of his time with us discussing some of his research. During the remaining time, he wanted to hear what the students had to say about taking an entire course on science and religion, which is a rarity. On the whole, they gave some polite responses, and one of the students caught me a bit off guard and told him that "This class helped me to be less of a 'jerk,'" but she used a slightly more powerful, college-version of the word "jerk". I joke with my colleagues that I am going to use this quote as the cover of my professional portfolio.

This quote, I think and I hope, also applies to me after ten years of trying to understand for myself and teach others about science and religion, and for today, somewhat more narrowly, how to respond to intelligent design creationism. For me, getting beyond evolution and having the calming influence of history has been most helpful. As you can probably tell, I still get outraged from time to time, and you may not agree with my reading of history or the points I chose to emphasize. Having any kind of vision to address the intelligent design movement in a thoughtful manner and to reconcile God and evolution requires some science, some history, some psychology and sociology, much theology, ever-growing perspective, and deep patience. In other words, to fulfill this vision requires you.

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Response to Warren Eshbach and Joe Shane

Aaron T. Smith

[Gettysburg Seminary 2016 Spring Academy] Thanks to Warren and Joe for providing us some helpful insight on the relationship between faith and science as each has very tangibly and practically encountered it, and for drawing some forward-looking conclusions from their respective experiences. They have offered us a “hopeful retrospective” in light of the Dover case and of coaching tomorrow’s science educators. I’m sure that we all respect their labors, and probably most of us share their commitment to a more amenable future concerning the interface between biblical faith and evolutionary biology.

Joe and Warren hold the view – as do I – that there is no *necessary* conflict between a biblically faithful doctrine of creation and an evolutionary account of species formation and development. I stress the word, “necessary” (no *necessary* conflict), because, as they indicated, there has been and to a large degree still is conflict. A couple of questions thus present themselves: if such antagonism is not intrinsically necessary, not logically obligated by the dynamics at play in confessing belief in the God of Genesis on the one hand and obtaining understanding of creaturely biology on the other, then why does it occur? What prompts some people to perceive a disagreement, and to invest their intellectual, emotional, even capital resources in fighting it out?

Our time today does not allow us to deal with the full range of issues that would have to be addressed in order to answer this question in detail. Warren and Joe noted, in any event, that these include matters of leadership, culture, education, politics, as well as, of course, religious conviction.

In order to amplify the hopefulness of their retrospective – that is, to contribute, such as I might, to their prefiguring of a more peaceful tomorrow – and recognizing that this is a seminary, I’d like to say just a few words about

the role of *biblical education* in framing the creation/-evolution and broader faith/science relationship. If the non-necessity of conflict is to be perceived broadly in our public square, and if our culture is to be broadly converted to it, then we will need not only to cultivate informed communities, such as Warren has tried to do in Dover, and to foster a more congenially-trained generation of science teachers, such as Joe is working at in Shippensburg. But also, we will need to foster a generation of pastors that understands how to communicate both the content of the Holy Scriptures and their intrinsic, revelatory *operation* in each new era. Let me unpack that briefly.

I used to tell my undergrads that we must not mistake Jesus’s admonition that the Kingdom of God belongs to the little children (Mark 10:14) as justifying juvenile treatment of God’s Word by us adults. For, this text also admonishes us to move from milk to solid food (1 Cor 3:2; Hebr 5:12-14); it engages us in an upward-spiraling movement toward spiritual maturity as, through reading and study, we come more fully to comprehend the wonder of God’s saving work in Christ Jesus.

We must teach our 1st-graders about Noah and the rainbow by 1st-grader means – flannel graphs, finger paints, or SpongeBob. But we must also return to this story with our 8th-graders in order to show them how it functions in the narrative of Genesis 1-11, and again with our 12th-graders, in order to teach them its place in the canonical flow of covenantal history. The student who has been shown not only what the Bible contains, but also how it operates, has been given a great present. She has been bestowed the key to flexible rather than antagonistic engagement with the challenging questions (of science, philosophy, ethics), with which she will be confronted throughout life.

The student who perceives not only that Scripture teaches of a figure named Noah, of a great flood, and of a rainbow, but also how that story plays its part in the biblical drama by which God is progressively revealed as the covenant God, is able to discern the hills on which conflict might be necessary, and on which it might not. She can tell, for instance, that such a hill is *not* the one on which the ark is presently resting!

What causes an attitude of antagonism between faith and science even though it is not intrinsically necessary? Many things, but one of especial concern to seminary educators is *incomplete biblical instruction*. Students who have been taught only to think of Scripture as a collection of discrete historical events, wisdom sayings, and mysterious prophecies, from which they might draw independent devotional applications or even a collective social activism, often have a hard time appreciating the cognitive function and specific nature of biblical argumentation in relation to philosophical and scientific discourse and findings. Their 4th-grade understanding of the flood does not know how to engage their 11th-grade training in geology in a constructive manner.

In other words, making the transition from having the Bible as a collection of particular stories to perceiving an interconnected unity across its diverse texts, into which the reader's thinking is drawn, just is the nature of spiritually mature Bible reading. And it is this kind of reading that needs to be taught if our culture is to be converted to the truth that the Bible is not necessarily opposed to science.

When each text is understood not as teaching a discrete spiritual mystery, but as contributing in its particular way to the singular message of God's great salvation in Christ, it becomes difficult to single out a given passage – say, Genesis 1 – and elevate a given (literal) reading of it to litmus test standing. It becomes easier to see that preservation of a given creative timeline, order, or causal mechanism is not the central point of Genesis 1 when that chapter is read in relation to the canonical message of re-creation, that is, when its content is reckoned as neither more nor less than a piece of the larger thematic structures of grace, redemption, and covenant. In that case, its message centers, as it ought, on the sovereignty of God over all rival authorities, as this is communicated in the context of Ancient Near Eastern beliefs.

Developing this wider focus in our congregations is hard work. Some are doing it well, and if you are one of those among us, please share the secrets of your success during our panel discussion.

The point that I wish to make in this brief response is that if biblical instruction is incomplete when it fails to move the reader beyond content knowledge to perception of canonical structure and form, then seminary biblical instruction is incomplete when it fails to teach pastors *how* to move the reader in this direction. The trainers themselves have to be trained to help others make this transition; anyone who has either pastored or received pastoral instruction knows that the transition does not just happen on its own.

My sense is that we are entering an era in which the need to ratchet up seminary biblical instruction to include the crucial element of canonically-minded pedagogy, if you will allow the expression, is particularly acute. The complexities introduced by science into the weighty matters of origins, anthropology, cosmology, and so on are hardly abating. One might hope, in this, that as seminaries rise to meet the challenge of educating its ministers to handle Scripture constructively in this era, they may simultaneously address the mounting, coordinate challenge of their own enduring relevance.

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Oh So Human, Yet So Divinely Complex: Science and Theology in the Exploration of Human Identity, Community, and Purpose

Frederick L. Ware

[Gettysburg Seminary 2016 Spring Academy] The title and large portion of the inspiration for our “Science for Seminaries” project at Howard University School of Divinity come from Psalm 139. Verses 13 through 18 of that Psalm read as follows (NRSV):

¹³For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

¹⁷How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸I try to count them – they are more than the sand;
I come to the end – I am still with you.

Psalm 139 depicts God as the creator shaping each individual, guiding the process of gestation from conception of the embryo to development into a fetus and birth of the same from the mother’s womb. Our existence is miraculous. In our quest to know and understand, we are unable to plumb the depths of the mystery of life and of God. At the end, when we will have in every period of history, over the numerous generations, exhausted all efforts to know, the mystery remains and God will forever be. Howard Thurman, a revered spiritual leader and thinker, who devoted his ministry to reconciliation and the development of inclusive community, said that Psalm 139 was his favorite passage from the Bible.¹

In order to describe our project at Howard Divinity School of course revision and campus activities, I propose the title and overarching theme: “Oh So Human, Yet So Divinely Complex: Science and Theology in the Exploration of Human Identity, Community, and Purpose.” The *big* science-related question for us is: What does it mean to be human? This concentration on the nature, meaning, and complexity of human life is quite fitting for Howard Divinity School, given the sizable number of scientists at Howard University and the history of African Americans, which is often told as a story of the struggle of a people to be recognized as fully human. I and other colleagues have looked to the sciences for new ideas and perspectives for enriching our theological inquiry into what it means to be human. Our desired take-away for students is their increased awareness of the wonder and complexity of human life.

I want to talk about five aspects of our Science for Seminaries project. First, I want to state and explain, in addition to the question of what it means to be human, what the other principal questions are that have shaped our inquiry. Second, I want to say something briefly about the core courses that have been revised to demonstrate, in very intentional ways, the integration of science in the theological curriculum. Third, I want to describe two campus-wide events sponsored through the grant project. Fourth, and something I am very excited about, I want to highlight what I think are some very interesting ideas and creative approaches to issues in religion and science that have been birthed by members of our project team. Lastly, I want to talk about the connection of the dialogue between religion and science to the work for social justice. In other words, I want to offer a rationale for this linkage between science, religion, and social justice.

Principal Questions in Our Inquiry

In addition to the major question of what does it mean to be human, three other questions have been important to us. (1) From where do we start and

remain connected? (2) On what shall be our focus? (3) In the end, what do we want to have accomplished?

The first question (from where do we start and remain connected?) deals with the matter of *social location* or *context*. Attentive to this question, we have been intentional about how the course revisions, course topics, campus events, and other grant activities are being situated contextually within the mission, history, and legacy of the School of Divinity and Howard University. Having, as its core values, truth, freedom, heritage, respect, service, equality, and justice, the school's mission statement reads: *Howard University School of Divinity, a graduate theological and professional school, educates and forms academic and religious leaders to serve the Church and society, and to celebrate the religious and cultural heritage of African Americans, the African Diaspora and Africa.*²

Howard University was established on March 2, 1867, by an Act of the Seventeenth Congress of the United States of America. The Act expressly provided for the creation of a theological department, but it was not until 1870 that an academic unit for theological education was established, and in 1940 this unit was fully accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. Today, Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD) celebrates 146 years of preparing theological scholars and religious leaders. As one of the 13 schools and colleges within Howard University, the School of Divinity is one of the few theological schools connected to a doctoral research university. Though the School of Divinity is not affiliated with a denomination, a variety of faith traditions are represented within the faculty, student body, and the school's other constituencies. These traditions include: Christian denominations such as Baptist (National, American, Progressive), Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Methodist (UMC, AME, AMEZ, CME), Presbyterian, Renewal Movements (Holiness, Pentecostal, Apostolic, Charismatic), United Church of Christ, and the recent inclusion of Islamic associations. The school offers three degree programs: the Master of Divinity (M.Div.), Master of Arts (M.A.) in Religious Studies, and Doctor of Ministry (D.Min). As a historically black institution, the school has a long and rich history of educating ministers and scholars in the theological disciplines as well as in religious studies for service to communities of color.

The second question (on what shall be our emphasis?) deals with the matter of *focus*. Participating divinity professors have the freedom and creative license to determine how much or how little science they will bring into their courses. As project director, my concern has been that the divinity professors not bring science into a *contrived* relation with the subject matter of their courses. My urging, which has been supported by our AAAS³

assigned teaching mentors, has been that they perceive this task of integrating science as a *natural* enrichment of their courses. So, they have dealt with a variety of topics, showing the conflict, contrast, and convergence of science with the subject matter of their courses. Some of these topics covered include:

- interpretations of the body, especially disability and disease, and the worth of persons suggested in these interpretations from both theology and the natural sciences
- special divine action (e.g., creation, providence, redemption/salvation, miracles, incarnation, and resurrection) in light of the challenges and insights of the evolutionary-complexity paradigm of modern science
- the structure and meaning of human existence within the cosmos (universe)
- the future and fate of human life and the cosmos (universe)
- the meanings of hope and redemption against the conditions of evil, loss, suffering, and death in biological and cosmic evolution
- human nature and moral behavior, exploring the theology and science on fallenness, original sin, and morality
- the influences of neurological and biological factors on spirituality (worship)
- the impact of climate change, ancient and contemporary, on human migration and competition and cooperation for natural resources
- genomic science and human identity
- philosophy, science, and religion as distinct ways of knowing

These topics are tied together around a singular focus of what it means to be and live as human, especially in just societies.

The third question (in the end, what do we want to have accomplished?) deals with the matter of goals and outcomes. We began our project with a vision of the end and allowed this envisioned end to guide our efforts. This question has been crucial, as our desire is for this initiative to have sustainability. New collaborations, relationships, and partnerships have grown out of the project thus far. In the third and final year of the project, we will be forming focus groups to explore further opportunities for improving the divinity school's work in religion and science.

Core Courses for Revision

Participating divinity professors, four altogether, have implemented revisions to several core courses in theology, biblical studies, and the capstone course in social justice ministry. These revisions have raised student awareness of the many intersections of science with the divinity curriculum. In the listing (below) of course offerings, we have gone from an offering of four courses to seven courses over a two-year period. In the third year, we will have increased the number of course offerings to nine. During the entire period of the project, some courses will have been repeated more than once.

2014-15 Academic Year:

- Introduction to Church Music & Worship (fall)
- Prophetic Ministry (spring)
- Systematic Theology I (fall)
- Systematic Theology II (spring)

2015-16 Academic Year:

- Introduction to New Testament (spring)
- Introduction to Old Testament II (spring)
- Philosophy of Religion (fall & spring)
- Prophetic Ministry (fall)

2016-2017 Academic Year:

- Introduction to New Testament (fall)
- Introduction to Old Testament I (fall)
- Introduction to Old Testament II (spring)
- Prophetic Ministry (fall)
- Research & Writing (spring)
- Systematic Theology I (fall)
- Systematic Theology II (spring)

For the Science for Seminaries project, the core courses which I have revised are “Philosophy of Religion” and “Systematic Theology I & II”. The Philosophy of Religion course is an introduction to the discipline and method of philosophy and the relationship of philosophy to the study of religion. Various topics of philosophical interest are covered in the course. Those topics where emphasis is made on the integration of science in theological studies are: (1) creation and cosmology (Is the universe created by God? If God exists, does God act in the physical world in general and, in particular, perform miracles? Is there a single, comprehensive, and ultimate explana-

tion of everything?); (2) morality and evil (What is the origin and source of morality? Why is there evil and suffering in the world? Is morality possible apart from God and religion?); (3) the soul (Are we bodies only or are we something more? What is the relation of mind, consciousness, or soul to the body? Is it possible or desirable (or morally permissible) to alter or transcend bodily and mental capacities?); (4) epistemology (How do we know what we know and then discern that it is true? How are the methods of religion and methods of science alike and different from the methods of philosophy with regard to finding truth? Is the relationship of religion to science one of conflict, independence, or collaboration?). The most intensive engagement with science was through guest lectures by our project science advisors, Daryl Domning and Georgia Dunston.

“Systematic Theology I & II” is a two-semester (year-long) course in Christian theology. In dealing with the prolegomena (disciplinary and methodological issues) to theology and theology proper (Doctrine of God), “Systematic Theology I” places emphasis on constructions of Christian theism amid various philosophical, cosmological, scientific, social, and cultural challenges to the plausibility of belief in God and special divine action. The purpose of “Systematic Theology I” is to introduce students to sources and methods for theological thinking and to explore the rational dimensions of theology in an examination of theology’s response to philosophical, cosmological, social, and cultural challenges to the plausibility of belief in God and special divine action. The pedagogical approach taken to meet the course goals was to lead students into a consideration of (1) the structure of human existence within the larger context of cosmology; (2) the meanings of hope and redemption against the conditions of evil, loss, and suffering in biological and cosmic evolution; and (3) re-mythologization of divine action (the various things that God is believed to do such as creation, providence, redemption/salvation, miracles, response to prayer) in light of the challenges and insights of the evolutionary-complexity paradigm of modern science.

“Systematic Theology II” covers the topics of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Creation, Theological Anthropology, Sin and Salvation, Church and Its Mission and Ministry, Sacraments, Eschatology, Theology of Religions, and Religious Belief and the Natural Sciences. “Systematic Theology II” continues reflection on the same challenges raised for Christian theism but with application to other basic beliefs of Christianity such as worship, spirituality, holiness (moral behavior), and the second coming of Christ and other matters of eschatology (perspectives on the future and fate of humanity and the world).

Campus Events

Our Science for Seminaries project included two events: (1) an Interdisciplinary Mixer in February 2015 and (2) a Conference in April 2016. A total of 36 persons (8 from Divinity and 28 from other Units) attended the Interdisciplinary Mixer. A broad range of the theological disciplines such as biblical studies, ethics, homiletics, religious history, theology, and world religions were represented by the attendees from the School of Divinity. The represented science disciplines included: anatomy, behavioral science (psychology), biology, chemistry, communication sciences and disorders, genetics, mechanical engineering, microbiology, pharmacology, and physics and astronomy.

Several collaborations resulted from the Mixer. For example, homiletics professor Kenyatta Gilbert invited Shameka Johnson, a professor in communication sciences and disorders, to give a lecture on vocal hygiene to his preaching class. Renee Harrison and Velma Love, two divinity professors, discussed with a professor in medicine, Roxanne Smith-White, approaches to holistic healing. James Hammonds, a mechanical engineering professor who focuses on systems design, expressed an interest in collaborating with Harold Trulear for exploring ways that the Trinity, as a system, implies norms for the evaluation of systems. Cynthia Winston, a professor in psychology, sought professors both in divinity and the sciences for collaboration on the question of what it means to be a person with a soul.

The conference was preceded by (actually kicked-off by) a special chapel service. Attendance was modest, with about 40 persons attending the chapel service and about 45 persons attending the conference. The guest speaker was the Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Holmes, Esq., president of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Among her several publications is *Race and the Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2002). Her sermon was titled "Dark Hope and Cosmic Power." Speaking from Psalm 18, she explored the wonder of biogenetic and cosmological power in the life of the individual and the community and the hope that it engenders.

In the morning sessions of the conference, information was presented on AAAS' DoSER⁴ program and on overall statistics on the Science for Seminaries project, and project faculty from Howard Divinity School and Catholic University engaged in a panel discussion about their roles and contributions to the project. In the afternoon sessions, outreach programs in science education sponsored by religious communities, non-profit and faith-based organizations, and public schools were showcased by divinity school alumni working in these areas.

I characterize the conference as a small initial step for the divinity school. A bold, major step would involve better planning of the event and its location within the school's annual alumni convocation, which is the largest and best attended event of the divinity school. The administration and faculty still have not come to recognize fully the importance of this initiative, although the project has been designed to cohere with the divinity school's mission.

The Creativity and Insights of Project Team Members

John Ahn, assistant professor of Hebrew Bible, is doing fascinating work in the use of paleoclimatology for interpreting the Hebrew Bible. He is a recognized scholar in the study of the exilic-forced migrations period (sixth century BCE). He is the founder and served as the chair of the Exile-Forced Migrations Group in the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings. This study of ancient climate and the emergence of political systems for control of water contributes to understanding of the effects of hydro-projects on minority populations. Of the numerous periods in biblical history that have puzzled biblical scholars, the conquest tradition (thirteenth to eleventh centuries BCE) and the exile of the southern kingdom of Judah (sixth century BCE) have been especially difficult to reconstruct. There is no extra-biblical documentation to corroborate the biblical stories of conquest, movements, and conflicts during these periods. The use of paleoclimatology not only illuminates the aforementioned periods but also bridges the sciences to biblical studies. Paleoclimatology provides "hard data" for historical reconstruction of the contexts, which are referenced in the cultural memory transmitted in the ancient literature. Paleoclimatology provides a much needed alternative to the old theory of regional warfare alone as the cause of forced migration. The arrival of the Philistines on the coast lands of the Levant may be connected back to long periods of drought. Biblical history, as cultural memory, recorded in the Hebrew Bible corresponds to the dry spells of 825-800 BCE and 770-725 BCE followed by an even more intense time of drought lasting 125 years, until 600 BCE. This may suggest the collapse of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which not only mismanaged its water system but also oppressed the peoples under its control through conquest and resettlement. The Neo-Babylonian Empire which inherited this water system continued to address the water crisis and need for labor for water projects by using forced migrations. Ahn's teaching shows how the collaborative relation between science and biblical studies can be positive and productive, illustrating the connection of cultural interpretation to natural

events such as changes in climate and the successes and hardships in human efforts to deal with these changes.

The critical perspective that Michael Newheart, professor of New Testament Language and Literature, brought to the study and interpretation of the New Testament is what he calls “eco-psychology” which is “the study of the health and pathology of our psychological ties to the environment.” The questions that guided his investigation as well as interrogation of New Testament texts are: How did environment affect biblical figures, and how did they affect their environment? And how does environment shape us, and how do we shape it? In students’ exegetical papers, he asked them to reflect on how science contributes to their understanding of the passage chosen for their papers. Students’ responses were varied and creative.

Harold Dean Trulear, associate professor of Applied Theology, is doing cutting edge work on disability and addiction through his course in prophetic ministry. The “Prophetic Ministry” course is a capstone course for M.Div. students. This course included a unit on disability and the church (under the unit “Developing a Cultural Critique”), exploring the ways in which science and religion have moved from competing claims on body, disease, and disability, to how science has both informed Christian understandings of disability, and places where the definitions have converged. These became the lenses for development of a robust theological anthropology, which critiqued notions of the human in contemporary culture that define persons with disability as defective, inferior, or subhuman. The lectures and class discussions have focused on interpretations of the body and the worth of persons suggested in theology and the natural sciences, highlighting how these understandings may either enrich or hinder the worship experiences of persons who are differently abled. The course also considered the concept of addiction as disease, rehearsing notions of recovery, healing and – from the Christian tradition – deliverance.

In the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semester offerings of my philosophy of religion course, our project science advisors, Georgia Dunston and Daryl Domning, not only presented information on their fields of expertise but also joined me in reflecting on how to address theological and philosophical questions. Dunston is professor of Microbiology and Founding and Interim Director of the National Human Genome Center, Howard University College of Medicine. Domning is Professor of Anatomy in the School of Medicine at Howard University and Research Associate, in the Department of Paleobiology at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. He is author (with Monika K. Hellwig) of *Original Selfishness: Original Sin and Evil in the Light of Evolution* (Routledge, 2006).

In Dunston’s lecture titled “Genomic Science for Seminarians,” she explained genomic science in layperson’s terms and emphasized the relation of genetics, as a mechanism of control and regulation, to the property of mind, mainly the mental functions of belief and choice. Her proposal to think of the mind in terms of genetics opens up possibilities unexplored in present discussions about the mind by focusing on the neural correlates of consciousness. Her theory of the relation of mind, soul, and genetics is explored in detail in an article titled “The Soul Determinant in Health and Disease.”⁵

In Domning’s lecture on “Suffering, Evil, and the Origins of Morality,” he took the students through an explanation of evolution and showed how evolution, if viewed from the right angle, solves the problems of evil and theodicy. He explained the emergence of not only evil but also cooperation, love, community (fictive kin), and altruism. Students were intrigued at the end of Domning’s lecture when he stated that although evolution got us to where we are today, by our choice of altruism, which Jesus elevates to the divine level, we can go beyond our base nature and become better.

Science, Religion, and Social Justice

African American history is often told as a story of the struggle of a people to be recognized as fully human. The June 17, 2015 shooting at the historic Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, dramatizes the horror of violence and destruction of human life throughout the world that is caused not by natural catastrophes or the ravages of famine and disease but by the cruelty of human beings who believe that the lives of other human beings are of no value. The shooting was a little over a year ago. But with the constant flow of news of one atrocity after another, the shooting seems to have occurred decades ago.

The question of how we perceive ourselves, our relations to one another, and the meaning or lack thereof that we assign to human life is an important question. Neither theological education nor the dialogue on religion and science can become erudite conversation. The moment is urgent. The threats to our existence and quality of life are imminent.

The contemplation and practice of justice, which is inseparable from the value of the human person and community, are requisite for the survival of humanity, which is facing a future of increasing conflict posed by the strains that the ever growing human population will place on the earth’s resources. Over 7 billion persons are living on the earth.⁶ Modest projections place the global human population between 8 and 11 billion by the

year 2050 and up to 15 billion by 2100.⁷ The effects of this population explosion are enormous: global warming and climate change, loss of biodiversity (species extinction), less fresh water, depletion of natural resources, lack of food, malnutrition, increase in diseases, lower life expectancy, increased rate of death, and the disappearance of democracy and justice with less freedom and more restrictions.⁸ On an overpopulated planet, life would be, as Thomas Hobbes said, “nasty, brutish, and short”. Prudent choices now in scientific research informed by the moral perspectives of the world religions (our oldest and most tried wisdom traditions) may direct cultural discourse and promote social action on our attitudes about reproduction and quality of life that are maladaptive.

The topic on human identity, community, and purpose is not only a significant subject for a curricular revision and event series but also an overarching theme that should inform all project activities, several of which could become, without this intentional connector, silos unto themselves and, even worse, irrelevant to our mission and social context.

Remarkable Past and Hope for the Future

Who are we? In our return to the Psalms, we hear one poet saying:

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;

⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.

⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,

⁷ all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas. (Pss 8:3-8; NRSV).

The mere fact of our existence, in the story and hazards of cosmic and biological evolution, is quite amazing. We are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Pss 139:14). Given the challenges that we now face, it seems that our future, if we continue to survive, will be as fascinating a story as our past. Maybe theological educators, clergy, scientists, and concerned activists can, in conversation with one another, reach a consensus on that, which will make possible a future characterized by justice, peace, and flourishing.

Notes

- 1 *Conversations with Howard Thurman*, produced and directed by Mischa Scorer. San Francisco, CA: Howard Thurman Educational Trust, 1987. YouTube video, 55:57. Posted Aug 27, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPzZBS-2oeU>
- 2 http://divinity.howard.edu/2_history_mission_vision.shtml
- 3 American Association for the Advancement of Science. <http://www.aaas.org/>
- 4 Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion. <http://www.aaas.org/DoSER>
- 5 Georgia M. Dunston and Philip Kurian, “The Soul Determinant in Health and Disease,” *The Human Genome Oracle* (December 2015): 23-25. <https://issuu.com/nhgcdocs/hgo>
- 6 <http://www.census.gov/popclock/>
- 7 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/22/population-world-15bn-2100>; <http://www.everythingconnects.org/overpopulation-causes.html>. The Everything Connects website created by George Tsiattalos, a solar energy professional, is an example of how quality information in the sciences can be appropriated and shared by ordinary but concerned persons interested in contributing to change and improvement in the world.
- 8 <http://www.everythingconnects.org/overpopulation-effects.html>

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The Spirit of Creation: The Covenant as the Basis of Creation

Aaron T. Smith

[Workshop: Gettysburg Seminary 2016 Spring Academy] Thank you for coming to this workshop. Our time together is brief, so I'd like to keep introductions rather short, particularly since I have been introduced once already, yesterday, during the plenary sessions. For those whom I've not yet met, my name is Aaron Smith. I am a candidate for ordination to parish ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Prior to pursuing ordination in the ELCA, I was Associate Professor of Theology at Colorado Christian University, located just outside of Denver, Colorado. CCU is a small, private, evangelical college; I taught there for six years. Before that I earned my Ph.D. in systematic theology from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where I focused mainly on the thought of the modern Swiss theologian, Karl Barth.

As you can surmise from these quick autobiographical remarks, my interest in science did not stem from formal background or training in any particular scientific discipline. Rather, it emerged from trying to teach theology to the next generation of pastors, teachers, nurses, businessmen and women. It became clear to me, as it does at some point to every theologian, I think, that the ways in which doctrinal truths are formulated tomorrow, the ways in which account is given of God's redemptive work in creation, of what it means to be human, and what it means to have eschatological hope, will not take precisely the same shape as they did yesterday. These formulations will be in conversation with different concerns about the makeup of the world and humanity, and the authenticity and fulfillment of created existence. And these concerns, in our context, are increasingly informed by the sciences.

About the same time that I began to appreciate the need more thematically to engage contemporary scientific discussions in the classroom, I also

happened to be starting a new book project. I had just signed a contract with InterVarsity Press to write a piece for its new line in constructive theological engagement with Scripture. The book attempts to give, at least incipiently, an "actualistic" account of creation; that is, working specifically from the creation story of Genesis 2-3, it contends that the ground of all existence is an eternal divine act of self-relating, or of covenanting with another.

What happens is that God wills not to be God other than in relationship, and this primal will, in which God assigns God's self this covenantal way of being, is at once the ground of all other being. The covenant is the basis of creation.

I characterize this as an inherently *pneumatological* account. If we in the west are ever to disabuse ourselves of the unfortunate dualisms of Platonic thinking, and cognize "God" and "creation" strictly from a center in Scripture, then we have to learn not to assume that "spirit" means "non-material-something." The Spirit is not simply whatever amounts to the inverse of the perceptible. In fact, this second book picks up the main argument of my first book, entitled *A Theology of the Third Article: Karl Barth and the Spirit of the Word*. There, I contended that the Holy Spirit is not just the invisible version of God, but rather, with the third article of the Nicene Creed, and following Barth, the Spirit of God just is God being God *a third time*.

Eternally, God just is God-with-us. There is no God above or behind the Redeemer of all history, who wills to be known only in and through this Redemption. God triadically reiterates his eternal self-decree to be God as such, and so exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (I should indicate that, in this, I stand with those who interpret Barth as logically grounding God's triunity in God's eternal will.)

To confess the Spirit of God is not to acknowledge the pinnacle of non-sensate being, but to recognize the reality that God causes God's self once again to be Lord of time, God here and now in the same manner and according to the same self-determination that God was God there and then, in the history of Israel finding fulfillment in the Christ. God wills not to have God-ness other than in continuing, covenantal engagement with creation.

Thus, the working title of the book, and this presentation, is: *The Spirit of Creation: The Covenant as the Basis of Creation*.

It did not take long for me to identify points of convergence between my emerging classroom interests and my book research. In particular, as I have tried to give an account of being that is inherently dynamic and relational, I have found it helpful to engage certain fields of science in the broad

topic areas of anthropology, environment, and the problem of evil. In the light of our theme for the Academy Week, I thought we might take the bulk of our time this afternoon, say the next 20 minutes or so, to sketch out the questions with which I had started to deal in the classroom and on which I have been working in my book vis-à-vis the first two of these topic areas (such restricted time will not afford the chance to engage the third). We'll leave the last 5-10 minutes for Q & A and discussion.

Anthropology

If God just is God in execution of a concrete event, then the task of theological anthropology – of giving account of the human in light of the being and life of God – is to learn to think and speak of the human as a.) *radically contingent* (in that her being is entirely consequent upon the prior action of God); b.) *interdependent* (her coming to be is bound up with the sum total object of God's self-externalizing, if you will); and c.) *proleptic* (God's ever-prior action is redemptive, oriented toward maximal mutual flourishing). To explicate this threefold constitution, I have found it useful to engage recent findings in the field of genetics.

On the classroom side of things, I had begun to notice, after a few years of teaching hundreds of evangelical college kids, that some of the questions that exercised the passions of their parents and grandparents failed to generate as much excitement among the younger generations. For instance, while the age of the earth and evolution continued to be an area of interest and some debate, a substantial proportion of students exhibited indifference toward the topic. They explained that the different arguments did not seem solvable. I had to correct them on that; there are better and worse cases being made, and achieving some clarity about which is which, and why, is useful. But they also explained that they did not feel that, even if the arguments were settled, the issue was a central matter of faith. That insight I wholeheartedly affirmed and encouraged.

Recognizing this coolness toward earlier tussles, I poked around to see if there might be some enthusiasm for new conversations. When I had conducted enough background chats to conclude that we could likely field seven students to enroll in a course exploring issues of theology and genetics, I put a class together.

I offered "God and Genetics" in fall 2014, hoping for between 7 and 10 registrants; enough to make load, but still small enough also to conduct the class as a seminar rather than lecture. Twenty-four students enrolled. As I recall, about 60% were Theology majors. The rest were majoring in biology, business, and psychology. I took the total number and diversity of majors as

at least preliminary confirmation that, indeed, there is an emerging awareness among younger folks that they will be encountering issues of faith and science quite different from those of their parents and grandparents. They prefer to discuss these issues rather than the old ones, and to find resources that will help them as people of faith trying to live in 2050 rather than 1950.

The students and I learned that the list of questions raised by the science of genetics, which are germane to theological anthropology, is massive. Let me simply lay out for you some of the inquiries that we discussed, and that I have privately researched in my book.

How reducible is the human to its genes? Is it useful to differentiate the human as a species genetically from other species, that is, can we locate the image of God in the genes? What is the intended focus of God's act of creation, the genotype or the phenotype, or again, in which is the image of God located? Neither? Both? What does the Son of God assume in becoming human, the genotype or the phenotype? Which, in turn, is the focus of redemption? And accountable (genetic determinism)? In what ways do genes interact with epigenetic factors to make up an individual's body? What about personality, to what extent is that genetic (environmental, or social)? Are genes like automatons, reflexively "concerned" only with their unique function as it contributes to survival, so that they might accurately be described as "selfish?" In what way does our language feed back on to our scientific construction of reality, that is, insofar as scientific discoveries find expression in an act of linguistic description (journal reporting), to what extent does language constitute a subtle imposition on to our understanding of the reality being described? In this, being linguistically en-framed, is science ever really value free? To the extent that scientific discovery is inherently value-laden, might genes profitably be described not as selfish, but as *charitable*? Techniques for editing genes are improving: is it a *transgression* of our humanity to edit the germline, or an *expression* of it? Is there an ethical line that might broadly be agreed upon in gene editing, say, between fighting disease on one side and trait selection on the other? If exercising determinative control over our genes represents the fullest expression of our humanity, then might it ironically be the case that we are most human when we transcend the humanity we have historically known, that is, when we "improve" our *somas* a la, say, transhumanism? "*My Spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be 120 years*" (Gen 6:3): Is this so? Is there a distinction to be made between lifespan and life? If so, does that make death an intrinsic part of an authentic, full life? Or should the human do whatever is in its power to extend its lifespan through a cocktail of drug prescriptions, stem cell treatments, and therapeutic

cloning? Speaking of cloning, what about cloning for reproduction? Does this represent a forward step in evolution's march, or a sideways trail that will prove useless, maybe even harmful? Would this introduce a potential, for instance, for asexual species propagation, and in this, perhaps, an account of the image of God that is post-gendered?¹

*Environment*²

Given our time constraints, I will be briefer in surfacing areas of environmental interest. Here, as indicated, my main concern is to show the interrelatedness of all life. One way of demonstrating that is, again, genetically. Another way is to show the basic molecular composition of the human creature.³

Obviously, the human is comprised of many of the same basic elements that we find in our atmosphere. That is not surprising from an evolutionary standpoint. The question is what it means for us theologically to recognize that we share in the essential atomic building blocks of the world, and in fact in some respects are neither more nor less than a particular formation of those blocks.

The critical point that I want to make theologically is that it is inadequate to think of the human as a self-complete entity standing over against its environment. In the language of classical philosophy, it is helpful to think of the human less as a *being* and more as a *becoming*. We only always come to be as such, or, our lives are a history of covenants (bonds) made from the atomic to the cellular to the organic to the cultural level.

One simple way of illustrating this, which connects at least with the popular scientific imagination, is to consider the earthen-character of human existence in light of the prospect of colonizing other planets. This prospect remains more sci-fi than sci, but it occasionally gets expressed in popular media outlets as an impending need. As it exploits the resources of earth beyond its capacity to sustain life, humanity will have to find some way to deport itself to another world. Of course, there we will have to learn to be more ethically responsible agents, at least until we figure out means of exploiting whatever that world gives us.

There is a pretty substantial philosophical laziness, it seems to me, in such thinking, in that it assumes that we *can* detach ourselves from earth without entailing any qualitative loss to our humanness; as if humanness has nothing to do with earthenness. If we were to build a colony on, say, Mars, we would, for the sake of survival, gradually have to adapt ourselves to that planet's gravity. (It would be contrary to our evolutionary heritage to strive to maintain an artificial gravity environment forever.) But of course, the

force is much weaker on Mars – about 3.7 m/s^2 as opposed to 9.8 m/s^2 here on earth. We can imagine what that will mean over time for the structure of our muscles, as every step is easier and longer, and every object lifted is lighter than here on earth. Light cycles will similarly affect the evolution of our pupils, the thickness of our eyelids, even the strength of our optical nerve. Mars days are 2.7% longer than earth days. That builds a different rhythm into activity, indeed a different time (seconds, minutes, hours are 2.7% longer than on earth). Mars time is not the same as earth time; our biological clocks would have to adjust.

This all assumes that we find a way to content ourselves with evolving while living in shelters and wearing space suits (at least until suitable “terraforming” took place, which is pure speculation). The leaps needed to take leave of such protections are hard to imagine ever achieving. With an atmospheric pressure only about 1% of earth's, there's virtually no medium for sound to travel across. In time, then, our eardrum either would evolve into the most radically sensitive organ conceivable, or more likely, evolve away, as we give up communicating by speech. But language use is a pretty evolved capacity of our earthen existence. Our thinking is intimately connected to it. It's tough to imagine what kind of thinkers that we would be as a species.

Similarly, our cells have to be oxygenated to respire and grow. It is difficult to know what kind of cellular existence we could have without this gas in such abundance as it is here.

We could of course go on. The point is that this may be a good time to confess that to be human is to recognize the radical interdependence and earthenness of life as we know it, and to respond in *gratitude* for the earth. We ought to signal that it is *inhuman* to exploit this good creation with the expectation that we can just plant ourselves elsewhere. Our focus should be on care of this planet, rather than its abandonment, precisely because we reject the notion that we can so refine our existence as to detach it from this world, take custodial control over it, and perpetuate it at our leisure.

Concluding Remarks

Let me bring these anthropological and ecological observations together by way of conclusion. The crimson thread connecting them, again, is that humankind is holistically constituted in networks of relation, covenantally-made, through and through, from the most minute, sub-microscopic to the grandest, cosmic levels. Whatever causal agency we enjoy whereby we will relationship simply derives from our ontic constitution in relationship.

To wit: the brain does not direct the body to absorb carbohydrates, burn fat, or oxidize food molecules. In fact, the brain's very existence

presupposes such metabolic processes; neurons are at once the output of the reflex cellular activity of energy conversion (just like the heart, liver, kidneys, and other organs, the brain is derivative of embryonic cell division), as well as centers of this very activity. That is, neurons are given rise as cells, at least indirectly, by that cell function which produces energy (that is, by the metabolism apart from which there would be no cellular life), and function themselves by metabolizing glucose to form adenosine triphosphate.

This obviously means that the seat of human consciousness should not be too strongly abstracted from its somatic home. Biochemically speaking, the brain simply is a part of the *soma*; it is not some special organ preformed and inserted into the head. It rather comes to exist, and comes to know existence, organically, in and through a biochemical heritage shared with every other bodily tissue, and as geneticists have shown us, with the tissues of non-human life as well.

This single observation concerning neurological growth and function should have at least two consequences for our line of inquiry. First, it should check the transhumanist suggestion that some kind of human life can be formed and perpetuated in and through an alternative, non-somatic substrate. That would be to contend, as transhumanists often do, that the seat of consciousness can be strictly detached from the *soma*; that the brain can be reified into a complex information-holding-and-arranging place, its holdings and arrangements (note the subtle shift to substantive-al thinking) can be digitized, offloaded, and then uploaded into a different holding and arranging place. The problem with this, as I see it, is not a lack of technological ability; with technological achievement, hope springs eternal. It is rather with the lazy supposition that the brain could be so non-organically rendered and still qualify as the seat of human consciousness.

In the long arc of human evolution, there has never been a point at which this species per se (or any other) has so overly refined its self, and posited for itself a life so detached from all life. How could it, when the evolution of its self-understanding has been so thoroughly ingrained into the evolution of its body in its environment? The question that must be answered, then, is whether the sterilized scientific mindedness that has given birth to this radically distilled “humanism” is a gain, a forward step in evolution’s march, the dawning of a new age of existence, perchance, or something else, one of the many sideways trips that in time will inevitably be lost to selection. My sense is that the latter is the case.

The problem lies in failure to perceive the subtle holism of distinctly human consciousness. To be *human* consciousness, the awareness must encompass the fact and nature of its own happening. Not only must one have a sense of self, but also, one must have an evaluative sense of why this

self and not another, that is to say, an immediate awareness of the self that *can be*.

This coordinate evaluative sense develops with the more mundane sense that one exists. What happens is that neurological connections and pathways are formed, which not only ensconce in what we call “memory” a particular history according to which identity is formed, but which also, in this identity formation, prefigure (although not strictly delimit) a future. Only in such reiterative past-future motion is the consciousness *human*.

Things are a bit more complicated even than this. Neurons form as entities themselves, that is, according to a particular kind of operation and within a particular range of potential, such that their collective product (knowledge, including consciousness) conforms to a certain predetermination. Human knowing will always be neuro-logical: reason structured after the capacities latent in neuron-entities.

The neuron grows into its self in a host environment of other neurons and chemicals (the brain), which receive and transmit stimuli from and to a broader host environment (the body), which itself receives and transmits input from still a broader environment (ocular, auditory, etc.). The neuron only forms as such from within this interplay. Its cellular composition (including its ability to receive and transmit electronic signals) and habitual affinities for other cellular compositions (its inclination to form pathways with other neurons and, as these are habitually made, its capacity for enhanced readiness in the forming) are not preset, but they are preconditioned. Thus the knowledge that is collectively achieved by neuro-chemical actions is, from the outset, co-determined among concentric environments – both as outcome of and reciprocally contributing agent to these.

Abstract the neuron from these environments and this quintessential intake/output dynamism and you no longer have the human neuron, and with it, distinctly human consciousness. You have a knowledge that is sub-neurological, and therefore something sub-human. (To reduce humanity to knowledge in a non-somatic substrate is not evolutionary progress, but regression to a lesser state of being.)

Yet at the same time, the second consequence that comes from recognizing the brain-body holism is that the human, qua human, is neither more nor less than a form of developing agency. Knowledge must come again to be what it is; neurological formations must come again to learn and construct identifying memory, and so must ever reenact the energy-translation by which the brain exists and functions as it does.

There is nothing intrinsically final about a given biochemical makeup – whether that “given” is today’s, or that of 100,000 years ago, or of 100,000 years ahead. There is always only a recommencing of what is. Failure to

perceive this leads to idolatrous freezing of the known human, that is, glorifying any one biochemical identity as if intelligently designed *per se*.⁴

The futurity of human consciousness, its constant openness to the prospect of new and more mutually productive series of associations, demands that we not affix the human to a particular state of its existence. The human must always come to be what it is, come again to the interrelations, which constitute its being in any moment, and which cause it in each moment to look toward the next – to consider and in various ways live into what it might be.⁵

Thus in framing our account of authentic creaturely being we have a dialectic between reductionism of non-somatic existence on one side, and inflationism of an allegedly designed *soma* on the other. If we are to think rightly about the interconnected, interdependent nature of human existence, we must locate the self between these two poles, not in a settled way, but by constantly moving between the one and the other (set here only as if held in place by the opposing polarities of two magnets).

Notes

- 1 At this point, slides were shown to highlight the contingent, interdependent, and proleptic nature of genetic existence.
- 2 This section of the presentation was introduced with a slide on shared genes.
- 3 A slide on the molecular breakdown of the human being was shown at this point.
- 4 What we glorify in the one history of Jesus of Nazareth is *true* humanity in the sense of actualized and ensconced history of complete obedience to, or utter dependence upon God. We do not glorify his particular genetic structure, as if the achievement of redemption in every other human takes the shape of biochemical “conversion” to his particular brain-body construction.
- 5 Scope will not afford its exploration at present, but one concrete matter of some relevance here is the prospect of therapeutic cloning. Although the human comes to its self as a totality, I see no reason why therapeutic transplantation of body tissues, should the manifold difficulties of host rejection be effectively overcome, would render a specific individual less than human, so long as the corollary pole of reductionism is not invoked by, say, the overreach of indefinite life extension. The point at which human self-awareness reduces to a collection of interchangeable tissues, so that all continuity is lost with one’s originating history, is the point that true humanity is compromised. Everything up to this point can be explored as a distinctly *human* possibility.

Promoting the Good of the Child: The Case of Deaf Children and Cochlear Implants

Karoliina Nikula

[Workshop: Gettysburg Seminary 2016 Spring Academy] Cochlear implant can be described as a most exceptional technological device: it can provide a human being a sense of hearing. It is the only technological device that can bring about a sense for a human being.¹ In that way, it can be argued to be an amazing innovation and even a miracle maker: it is a technological innovation that can help a deaf person to aim towards hearing ability that one would not otherwise have. Most deaf people will gain from the implant at least in some way, if we think about hearing.

Cochlear implant can be argued to be an example of medicalization, in the way that it was first invented for adults who lost hearing ability. Later on the use of cochlear implants broadened to adults born deaf, and after that to children born deaf.²

In 1995, after a long period of lobbying and political action, sign language was granted legal recognition in Finland. In 1997, the first cochlear implant surgeries were performed on children in Finland. At present, 90% of deaf children are having cochlear implant surgery. The use of sign language as a first language is diminishing. The majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents, and they are being asked to make a choice: should their children get cochlear implants or not. Previous empirical studies have shown that some parents feel their choices are not always respected.³

The aim of my doctoral research project was to study cochlear implant clinical practices using the concepts of goodness, capability, and choice, as well as to analyze whether the shift in clinical practices from sign language to spoken language is based on careful deliberation and reasonable

arguments. This study helps us better to understand the processes parents go through when deciding whether or not to get cochlear implants for their children, as well as the family's journey through treatment options and standard clinical practices. In addition, the research provides tools for parents of deaf children to assist their decision-making and to medical practitioners who advise these parents.

The study was focused around the following research questions: (1) What constitutes medical goodness for a child born deaf? (2) In what ways do cochlear implants and sign language promote a deaf child's capabilities? (3) Is it adequate to speak of "choice" when thinking about the dilemmas of parents of children born deaf?

The research methodology was philosophical concept and argumentation analysis along with analysis of the construction of the concept of choice. The research data consists of various sources and literature. The sources can be divided into the following: 1) "Avaintietokansio" [materials made available to families of the deaf]; 2) Publications of the "Satakieli" [Nightingale] seminars; 3) Brochures and other information provided by device manufacturers; 4) DVD and video recordings; 5) Internet pages; and 6) Legislation.

The literature was composed of: (1) Previous empirical studies on the parents of deaf children getting treatment for their children. Empirical studies of family experience include materials published by the Finnish Association of the Deaf and the Institute for the Languages of Finland, e.g., *Suomen viittomakielten kielipoliittinen ohjelma* [Finland's language-political Program for Sign Languages] (2010); a publication of the Ombudsman for Children *Hei, kato mua!* [Hi, look at me!] (Johanna Kiili and Kirsi Pollari, eds., 2012); Riia Celen's documentary *Sanoja sormenpäissä* [Words on fingertips] (2009); and Minna Luukkainen's *Viitotut elämät: Kuurojen nuorten aikuisten kokemuksia viittomakielisestä elämästä Suomessa* [The Signed Lives: Experiences of Deaf Adolescents' Everyday Life in Finland] (2008). These provide information on the experiences of families whose deaf children are being treated. Internationally, Stuart Blum's *The Artificial Ear* (2010) also provides information on the experiences of families. (2) Ethical and medical discourse on cochlear implants in deaf children. (3) Previous philosophical and ethical work, particularly the following: a) Martha Nussbaum's capability approach; b) Georg Henrik von Wright's *The Varieties of Goodness* (1963, Finnish translation 2001); c) rational choice theory, especially in the work of Jon Elster. In addition, (4) Methodological handbooks (e.g., literature about the conceptual tools) were used.

The study was organized as follows. Chapter two examines deafness from two points of view: audiological and socio-cultural. I also introduce

things often associated with deafness, such as sign language and deaf culture. Here I discuss the technical aspects of cochlear implants and provide a brief history of the deaf in Finland. In chapters 3-5 I examined the three main concepts – goodness, capabilities, and choices – with reference to the research questions. These provide essential conceptual tools when analyzing the issue, for the processes connected to cochlear implants are centered around the question of what constitutes a good life for the child, the child's ability to develop, and the choices that parents in this situation must make.

My research demonstrated the following: (1) The transition from sign language to spoken language is not based on sound arguments. The research did not find a solid rationale for reducing the use of sign language in order to rehabilitate hearing. Giving up sign language cannot be said to promote the child's good, capabilities, or possibilities to make independent choices in the future. On the contrary, it may indeed interfere with them.⁴

(2) In conjunction with the cochlear implant treatment process, it sometimes seems that there is more an illusion of promoting choice and increasing capabilities. We can also speak of language as an illusion in the sense that in the literature I surveyed (as well as in this discourse), language is often used synonymously with spoken language. The rhetoric used directs choice and creates impressions. We cannot speak of a family's autonomous, rational choices if the situation does not meet the criteria for choice.

(3) Occasionally the process seems to be about audism, i.e., valuing spoken language over signed language, medicalization, technological imperatives, and turning cochlear implants into an ideological issue. All of these can have an effect on the decision-making processes of parents.

(4) Cochlear implant clinical practices differ from general health care practices in the sense that implant practices are not always based on evidence (e.g., there is no evidence of the advantages of choosing not to learn sign language; there is as yet no knowledge of the long-term effects of cochlear implants). Furthermore, health care usually focuses only on areas within the medical field, but a language is not only a medical issue. Usually health care practices are based on research results, are limited to areas in which medical authorities have competence, and are designed to maximize the patient's capabilities.

(5) Legislation, different schools of thought, and treatment practices create different ways of understanding deafness. Legislation treats the deaf in terms of language and handicap. Different schools of thought lead to polarized discourse about deafness. And finally, according to the reports of parents, current clinical practices require them to choose one language for their child, although it would be possible to choose both sign language and spoken language. These divisions in the discourse may affect the decision-making of parents.

(6) The idea of choice is not the best way to promote the well-being of deaf children. Focusing instead on *capabilities* would free parents and health care practitioners from the burden of having to know things which will only come with time: that is, if all capabilities are promoted, it is not necessary to know how hearing or speech will develop, what the child would like to do or be when s/he grows up, or what sort of future the child will have. A discourse of choice creates an either/or, rather than a both/and situation. Both/and is a better platform from which to develop a child's full capabilities.

(7) The concepts of goodness, capabilities, and choice provide useful tools to examine cochlear implant clinical practices and the dilemma of families with deaf children. These concepts can also be used more generally in thinking about ethical considerations in medical practice, as they represent fundamental issues in terms of both ethics and health care practice.

(8) Cochlear implant clinical practices need to be developed. This research shows that written materials supporting parental decisions need to be improved, and care needs to be taken that there is space given to different alternatives. In addition, there needs to be more multi- and cross-disciplinary co-operation to improve the prospects for deaf children.

Based on this research, I suggest that in the future we need to focus on four things. First, we must pay attention to the rhetoric used in legislation, in information packets for families of the deaf, and in the research literature. Second, instead of talking about choice, we must take into consideration the child's strengths and skills on many levels. Third, we should consider the possibilities offered by multiculturalism, which include different types of language choices, as well as multi- and cross-disciplinary clinical teams. If advice is being given on language, the treatment team should include a language specialist as well as a member who knows sign language. My research suggests the need for further multi- and cross-disciplinary co-operation. Fourth, deaf children should be treated as a whole, not simply through their hearing or lack thereof.

Science – in the manner of cochlear implants – can improve the hearing of a deaf person. Science does not necessarily help to give a language to a person, since it is also up to a person him/herself and the environment one is offered to develop a language. Science can play a role in the way in which one acquires a language: audio or visual language and the kinds of ways one has to communicate. Acquiring a language is not only scientific process; it is also a deeply social and humane process.

Notes

- 1 Retinal implant is being developed for blind people.
- 2 See e.g., Stuart Blume, *Artificial Ear: Cochlear Implants and the Culture of Deafness* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010).
- 3 Johanna Kiili and Kirsi Pollari (ed). *Hei, kato mua! Vuorovaikutus ja hyvinvointi kuurojen ja huonokuuloisten lasten elämässä* (Helsinki: Aksidensi Oy. Lapsiasiavaltuutetun toimiston julkaisu 2012:3); Kuurojen Liitto ry and Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus. *Suomen viittomakielten kielipoliittinen ohjelma* (Vantaa: Multiprint. Kuurojen Liitto ry and Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus, 2010); Riia Celen, *Sanoja Sormenpäissä-document* (DVD; Kuurojen Liiton julkaisuja 58, 2010).
- 4 Karoliina Nikula, *Promoting The Good of The Child: A Social-Ethical Analysis of Cochlear Implants in Children Born Deaf* (Helsinki: Unigrafia, 2015).

Karoliina Nikula holds a Ph.D. in theology with a concentration in social ethics from The University of Helsinki. For her studies she has lived for periods of time in Utrecht, Holland; Aberystwyth, Wales and Alberta, Canada. As an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland she has served as a parish pastor in Kotka, and as a hospital chaplain in Kotka-Kymi parish union. Nikula is a board member of The European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy (ENHCC). During her doctoral studies she taught ethics and bioethics at the University of Helsinki.

Sermon from Luke 15:1-3 and 11b-32

Dave Larrabee

This Sermon was preached on the Fourth Sunday in Lent on March 6, 2016 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Vienna, Virginia. Emmanuel Lutheran, along with Fairfax United Methodist Church just a few miles away, committed to raising \$50,000 each to pay for the laundry room and the bathroom and showers for the new Lamb Center. On the previous three Sundays in Lent I had spoken briefly about this major special appeal in all three services. The chairperson of our board, Kelly Johnson who attends Floris United Methodist Church spoke about her experience volunteering and leading Bible Study at the Lamb Center. A former guest, John Anderton, also spoke eloquently about how the Lamb Center had assisted him when he experienced a period of homelessness.

The core biblical claims in the text focused on how we are called to treat society's outcasts and how God's love is unconditional both for those who know they are sinners and for those who forget. In this parable, the father is also "prodigal", using the word's alternate definition as "loved with reckless abandon." For this sermon, I used the concept of the "four-page sermon" which contrasts law and gospel by looking first at conflict of sin or brokenness in the text and in the world, followed by where God is at work in the text and in the world.

For an exegesis of the text, I looked at commentaries written by Matt Skinner at Luther Theological Seminary and Sharon Ringe at Wesley Theological Seminary. I also used a sermon written by Father Steve Schlossberg of St. John's Episcopal Church in Troy, New York. Steve is the previous director of the Lamb Center and my mentor and friend. I also drew on my real world experience at the Lamb Center. The key theological convictions that inform the sermon are that Jesus forgives us not because we deserve forgiveness but because we are sinful and that we can't appreciate this unearned forgiveness unless we remember that we are broken.

In light of my engagement with the biblical text I was less concerned with raising funds for the new Lamb Center than with how the Holy Spirit might instill in the hearer a hunger and desire to be actively engaged in God's mission of bringing good news to the poor and setting the captives free. The confirmation youth at Emmanuel have been serving at the Lamb Center one Saturday each month and after the sermon, some of the adults asked how they might also become involved in our ministry. If I were to amend this sermon, I would invite the hearer to join us in ministry and inform them of how they might do so.

In both the preparation and preaching of this sermon, I felt the presence of the Triune God upon me, giving me the words to say and the confidence to proclaim them. While preaching, I sensed a connection between me and the hearer that I know was the Holy Spirit at work. In wealthy Fairfax County, missional preaching can open up the eyes and the hearts of the hearer to the plight of hidden neighbors living in poverty and homelessness. As the director of the Lamb Center and a member of Emmanuel, I can continue to share with them the lives and stories of our guests including the miracles we experience at the Lamb Center. I can do this through preaching, teaching, conversation and through social media. Below is the sermon I preached on March 6, 2016 from Luke 15:1-3 and 11b-32:

Today's Gospel reading is perhaps one of the most familiar parables told by Jesus. While most Gospel readings during Lent are about the theme of repentance, this reading is rich with themes of mercy and repentance. The two definitions of the word Prodigal, which I will get to later, lend themselves to both of these themes.

Like the Lord's Prayer, the Prodigal story is so familiar that we may fail to understand how shocking it must have sounded to those Jesus directed the story towards. Familiarity breeds contempt, which the Pharisees often had for Jesus, but it can also breed indifference. Regardless of what we may think of the Pharisees, they were not indifferent to Jesus. They correctly perceived that the sinners whom Jesus forgave had no right to ask for forgiveness. Jesus would not disagree with this assessment. Jesus did not forgive these sinners because he found them sympathetic, He forgave sinners only because he found them sinful.

The Pharisees were appalled by the way Jesus not only welcomed these outcasts, but that he even went so far as to share something as intimate as a meal with them. In the eyes of the Pharisees, the outcasts listening to Jesus were deserving of only scorn because of the lives they lived. Many people maintain the same view in 2016 about our modern day outcasts, such as the poor, the homeless, the mentally ill, the addicted and the unemployed.

When a guest comes into the Lamb Center for the very first time, they often have a deer-in-the-headlights look. They come through our doors for various reasons; the loss of employment with no family support, an experience of trauma or abuse, addictive disorders or untreated mental illness. Regardless of what brings them to our doors, our guests have learned what it means to be treated as an outcast. They come to us not only homeless but also hopeless, not knowing which way to turn.

Many of the youth groups serving at the Lamb Center have heard our former guest Verena Sample tell her story. I love hearing her tell her story because she does so with deep passion and honesty. She always starts by saying her name and confessing that she is a sinner. She says this, not as someone beating herself up with guilt, but as someone who truly understands that we are all broken. She grew up in a Baptist family in Birmingham, Alabama, attended the Sunshine Bible Camp every summer and went to church each and every Sunday whether she wanted to or not. As an adult, she began a life of extravagant living, hitchhiking to Woodstock and becoming heavily involved with drugs and everything associated with the life of an addict. She moved away from her home to North Carolina, and then fled to Virginia when a drug deal went south and she feared for her life. She tried to follow a different path in Northern Virginia, but the pull to the wild side followed her despite her geographical relocation. Verena was sleeping at the bus stop near Ballston Metro when she first came to the Lamb Center. Verena often mentions that a man named Derrick Spady told her she needed to go to the Lamb Center and see “Mr. Dave.”

When the Pharisees grumbled about the company Jesus was keeping, he told them three parables. In the first two parables, the lost sheep and the lost coin, the items lost were only found after intense searching. Of the one hundred sheep, one sheep strayed off, looking at one interesting thing and smelling another, oblivious of its surroundings, until it had no idea where it was. The Woman’s lost coin was extremely valuable, not a coin tucked under the couch cushion that would buy a cup of Starbucks coffee but perhaps her only means of paying rent and avoiding eviction. When these items were found, there was great rejoicing, just as there is a thunderous round of singing by the angels in heaven when one sinner on earth finally repents.

The first definition of prodigal is spending money or resources freely and recklessly or wastefully extravagant. In the third parable of the prodigal and his brother, the younger son becomes “lost” intentionally and the father makes no effort to find him. While we tend to romanticize the younger son, Jesus paints a picture of grotesque depravity that the Pharisees would have found repulsive. For the younger son to ask for his inheritance, which he would normally receive after the father had died and the older brother had

received his share, the younger son is saying he can’t wait for his father to die. In a time when family connections were so important, the younger son added insult to injury when he took off to a distant country and washed his hands of his family. For the younger son to end up feeding unclean pigs, after squandering all his father had given him and paying the high cost of low living, would be seen as the final destination for a walk of shame. The younger brother starts his journey home not when he recovers his dignity, but only when he loses its last scrap. He comes to his senses, but his senses tell him nothing of the presence of God or of God’s mercy. His senses really only tell him that he has fallen, and that he has no right to be raised.

Sooner or later we all come to this point. Sooner or later we are all stopped by something. Perhaps it is only a mood; perhaps it is only a pang of regret; perhaps it is only a policeman with a breathalyzer! But sooner or later everyone is stopped, if only for a moment, we find ourselves in a desolate place, alone with our desolate thoughts. Alone with our thoughts, we begin to feel the weight of the shadow of forgiveness. We see that forgiveness is what we need, and we see that forgiveness lies far beyond our right to ask for it. The only real question we have is: Will God or won’t God forgive a truly unworthy person like me? And the only true answer is: God forgives no one else.

From what we learn of the older brother in the parable, it is easy to imagine that he left his father psychologically, perhaps filled with the bitter drink of resentment each day about the extra work he was doing and each night about the fun his brother was having.

A second definition for prodigal is having or giving something on a lavish scale. By this definition, the father in this parable is the true Prodigal. He loved the younger son with reckless abandon even though his son rejected him and washed his hands of the family. The father also held everything he owned for the older son, even though he had left his father emotionally. The youngest son returned to his family knowing that he was broken. He did not even have a chance to speak his well-rehearsed lines. It seems that the father had been sitting on the porch, day after day, waiting for the lost son’s return. He did not know why the son was returning or even speculate. The Pharisees knew that it was foolish for a man to run. For the father to accept him back as a son, no questions asked, demonstrated love on a lavish scale. He does not act like a normal father but portrays God sized acts of love and compassion. In addressing the father, the older brother refers to his brother as “this son of yours.” But the father addresses him as his son and then he says “this brother of yours.” This story is left open ended with the older brother being invited into the banquet as well. Perhaps, the older brother’s heart was finally broken for his little brother. But if we are to imagine this, we can imagine he found his little brother easy to forgive

God is compassionate in a way that utterly defies our sympathies. God forgives men who behave like beasts. He forgives women who live beyond the pale. Our sins are not dust that needs dusting off. Our sins are something more like bacteria, and they are eating us alive, and they are bound to leave us dead, unless God spreads his compassion on us on a lavish scale.

Verena finally came to the Lamb Center with her story in hand and her story still being written. She was welcome at the door without having to tell her story. Like all of our guests, she discovered all of the services the church through the more than fifty supporting congregations provides through the Lamb Center.

You have already heard about the laundry and showers the Lamb Center provides, and how Emmanuel along with Fairfax United Methodist are supporting the construction of these areas for the new Lamb Center. There is a long list of other services the church provides through the Lamb Center. This list really boils down to welcoming strangers and eating with them.

It is true that the poor need the services the church provides for them through the Lamb Center, and our guests are grateful for these services. The greater truth, however, is that the poor possess something that the church most desperately needs, and God has called us to meet them because without them we will starve and die. Like Verena, our guests are broken, and they know it. We are broken and we forget it. They help us to remember. They impose a little ash on our foreheads. They bring the shadow of the cross with them, everywhere they go.

What I love about Verena's story is that she truly understands forgiveness because she remembers that she is broken. We can never truly understand forgiveness – we are never going to truly ask for it – until we also remember that we are broken! Amen!

Dave Larrabee is Director of Operations at the Lamb Center in Fairfax, Virginia. He previously worked for the U.S. Department of Commerce and served 20 years in the U.S. Army and the Army Reserves. Larrabee has a B.A. in Political Science and German from Utah State University and an M.A. in Russian and East European Studies from George Washington University. He has been a member of Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Montgomery Village, Maryland since 1985. He is an M.A.M.S. student at Gettysburg Seminary.

Banquets and Gardening in a Restored Creation: Remembering Marge Mattson

Baird Tipson

The following homily was offered at the funeral of Marge Mattson, teacher and wife of retired Gettysburg College chaplain Karl, as an excellent example of how a faithful preacher sees one encounter between faith and science. It was delivered on June 26 at the College's Christ Chapel. – editor

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, ... groan inwardly,
[Romans 8:22]*

We've heard a lot recently about the creation. Our instruments picked up billion-year old noise from a collision of two black holes. Physicists like Brian Greene tell us that just as our eyes cannot see infrared or ultraviolet light, and just as our ears cannot hear very high or very low frequencies, there are dimensions of reality that even our most sensitive instruments cannot perceive. Lately there's been a lot of talk about "dark matter," left over from the big bang. Mathematical calculations insist that it must be there, but so far, at least, we can't find any way to detect it. More to our purpose, Greene explains that those same calculations demonstrate that there are "multiverses" – parallel universes that exist alongside the one we inhabit. We'll never know for sure, because nothing can pass from one universe to another. Physicists have to trust that these universes exist because their equations tell them so.

Interestingly enough, early Christians thought of "life after death" this way. Those who died were not headed for some distant place out there beyond the sun, filled with people who had formerly lived here on earth. They expected that after they had died, they were someday coming *right*

back here. Jesus's triumph over death was a signal that his followers would also triumph over death, and that eventually they would return not to some other place but to this one, to this very planet. Not that the world would be just as it is today. It would be a world restored, refashioned to the state its creator had intended in the beginning. Early Christians even thought that the restored world already existed, in what we might call a parallel universe that was as invisible to them as dark matter is to us. Jesus could pass back and forth from the restored universe to theirs, and he did so when they broke bread and drank wine together.

The world in which the early Christians lived was very much like the one we know – filled with injustice, greed, exploitation, and good intentions gone bad. If the Jews had been given a chance, they would certainly have voted to leave the Roman Empire. God's original purpose had been thwarted. Human beings were sick, infected by a disease that it was beyond their power to cure. Evil forces had taken over. So God himself, in the form of Jesus the Messiah, had entered the creation to put things right. Now, the early Christians thought, we are in an "in-between" time: Jesus's resurrection is a foretaste of the restoration that is to come, but that restoration hasn't come yet. In the meantime, it's up to his followers to throw all their energy into getting this world ready. They need to help this world through its labor pains while the new creation is being birthed.

This is where Marge and Karl come in, because their vision of the creation is an early Christian vision. People in this groaning creation have two jobs to do. First, they need to imagine what the restored creation will be like. In the midst of all this ugliness and injustice, how do we hold in our minds and hearts a vision of a world of beauty, justice, equality, and respect for all creatures? Over a lifetime of ministry, Karl has done this every time he steps into the pulpit. With power and elegance, he brings this vision to the hearts and minds of his hearers. Marge heard almost all of those sermons, but she had her own way of preaching the vision. In a lifetime of classroom teaching, lately at St. Francis but at many other places before, she shared her vision with her pupils. Her quiet demeanor and her gentle and patient wisdom implanted a vision in their hearts and minds that they will carry with them throughout their lives.

That's the first job. The second job is just as important: people have to do whatever they can – Lutherans say this is their "vocation," their "calling" – to bring this vision into being in the world around them. In their different ways, Marge and Karl responded to that call. In trips to the old civil rights sites of the south, to the Sea Islands off Georgia, to Nicaragua, and to countless other places, they and the college students they led not only drank in the vision but learned how to help bring it into being. In ministries in

Brooklyn, in Chicago, and right here in Gettysburg, they struggled – yes, sometimes they groaned – to bring justice, beauty, and equality to the communities they were serving. At St. Francis, Marge was known for patiently corrected her pupils' grammar. Even in small ways, she was working to bring her vision of a restored world into being. And Karl, Martha, Kristin, and Katie would say, I think, that it was in Marge's own family that the power of that calling was felt best.

Early Christians had a number of ways of keeping the vision in their minds and hearts. Steeped in the traditions of Judaism, they often thought of a "new" Jerusalem, most famously in the 21st chapter of Revelation, where the heavenly Jerusalem metaphorically drops "down" to become a restored community on this earth. A little closer to Gettysburg, two images will always stick in my mind when I think of Marge. The first is of a banquet. Jesus loved meals. He often shows up at mealtimes, and there's a strong intimation in the gospels that he shows up even when he isn't invited! At one of his post-resurrection appearances, he cooks fresh fish on the beach for his disciples. Marge loved meals; she was a great cook, and she enjoyed serving as host. At meals at her house, where she hosted visitors to the College, the Sunday meetings of Project Gettysburg León, dinner parties for her friends, and the annual St. Lucia parties for Swedes and Swede wanna-be's, she was in her element. I won't forget the Swedish coffee cakes she used to bring around at Christmastime, and my wife Sarah remembers the blackberry pie Marge baked the first time she invited us to dinner – every blackberry perfectly placed. When early Christians gathered for the bread and wine in their house churches, they liked to think they were getting "a foretaste of the feast to come." Those of us privileged to sit around Marge's table thought they were getting that foretaste, too.

The second image is of a garden. The original creation, the one that God intended, was good, all good, and the book of Genesis imagines it as a garden. When the world is restored, recreated, it will once again take the form that God first intended. Karl used to tell me that Marge's job in their garden was to spread mulch, but I know better. As anyone who walks through it will see, that garden is a joint creation. The flowers in bloom are gorgeous, but it's the vision behind the garden that moves us to joy. There may be poison ivy just beyond the garden's edge, there may be motorcycles roaring down the road in front of the house, but that piece of earth reflects the beauty, the harmony, the peace that gives us an inkling, just an inkling, of what a restored creation might be like.

Banquets and gardening in a restored creation; that's the way I want to remember Marge Mattson.

Baird Tipson is the former Provost at Gettysburg College. He also served as President of Wittenberg University and Washington College. He earned an A.B. from Princeton and a Ph.D. from Yale, studying under Sydney Ahlstrom. He recently published Hartford Puritanism: Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, and Their Terrifying God, and he is presently preparing an edition of Samuel Stone's "Whole Body of Divinity," the first systematic theology written in the American colonies.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion

Edited by Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Reviewed by Kristin Johnston Lergen

What is involved in a religious conversion? What does “conversion” entail for an individual, and what does it mean in the context of any specific religion? This excellent, comprehensive reference guide seeks to answer those questions and many more as it delves deeply into the issue of religious conversion from a variety of perspectives. In their introduction, the editors repeatedly emphasize the challenges in discussing the topic of religious conversion: everyone has an opinion on how and why it happens; and the relationship between an internal transformation and an external shift in one’s patterns of life is not always clear. “Conversion,” they write, “is a fascinating, complex, and contested topic” (4). In the course of offering a bit of history of the study of conversion, they note that one of the major problems in contemporary study is getting beyond the “subjectivist orientation” and embracing “a wider range of themes, disciplinary insights, and global forms” (7). In short, conversion is more than just a “Damascus Road” experience – even though Paul’s paradigm has been the standard against which religious conversion has been measured for centuries. Therefore, this volume seeks to demonstrate just how multivalent conversion actually is.

The volume is divided into two substantive parts. Part One is titled “Disciplinary Perspectives,” and the chapters in this section examine religious conversion in relationship to different academic disciplines, analyzing “the ways in which believers enter the tradition and/ or become passionate or devoted to a religion that was previously of only marginal importance in their lives or of only perfunctory interest” (17). Part Two is titled “Reli-

gions,” and the chapters in this section are devoted to the question of religious conversion in specific religious traditions.

A comprehensive analysis of each of the thirty-two chapters is impossible in a review of this size, so brief mention of just a few must suffice. In Part One, Eliza Kent discusses “Feminist Approaches to the Study of Religious Conversion,” noting that the role of gender norms and expectations is an important yet “largely neglected” aspect of religious conversion (297). At the beginning of the chapter, she helpfully describes the shift from “women” to “gender” studies, and the reason for it. She writes, “...gender refers to the norms, conventions, processes, and practices through which people come to understand, implicitly and more rarely explicitly, what it means to be a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ and what is expected of the relationships between and among men and women” (298). With this in mind, she goes on to describe how trends in gender studies have brought new questions to the analysis of conversion. Using examples from both India and Africa she recounts how traditional divisions of labor, marriage structures, and possibilities for leadership all affected how women responded to Christian missionaries. She also includes an interesting discussion of women’s conversion to Islam in the West. One of the most important conclusions of the chapter is how feminist scholarship has demonstrated “incontrovertibly” that “...religious conversion entails not merely a change of world-view or ethos, but a change in lifeworld” (318). That is, conversion is not just about a change of heart or belief, but an entirely different way of living in the world.

Part Two begins with a chapter on “Hinduism and Conversion,” by Arvind Sharma. This is a particularly helpful chapter, in that, in the context of Hinduism, “conversion” functions very differently than in Christianity. To the point: “...acceptance of Hinduism does not involve rejection of one’s previous religion” (430). Even more, Sharma notes that throughout Hinduism, there has been resistance to conversion, and at one time, given the relationship between Hinduism and the caste system, it was argued that one could only be born a Hindu, not become one (433). Finally, Sharma also describes the politics of conversion in India, which is of central importance in today’s context, with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its emphasis on “Hindutva” (Hindu-ness). Sharma discusses the Viswa Hindu Parishad and the *ghar vapasi* (“homecoming”) movement that seeks to “reconvert” (sometimes forcefully) Christian Dalits in particular.

The chapter on “Buddhist Conversion in the Contemporary World,” by Dan Smyer Yü is equally insightful. He describes how the “contours” of Buddhism changed rapidly in the United States in the 1960s and 70s, with the growth of European converts and non-Asian Buddhist teachers. He

discusses three aspects of Buddhist conversion in particular: “deversion, syncretization, and transference” (465). “Deversion” points to the intentional rejection of Christianity and contemporary values that accompanied many American conversions to Buddhism; it describes a “complex interplay, rejection, and negotiation between Buddhism as the new faith and pre-existing religious beliefs and practices” (476). “Syncretization” emphasizes the focus on social activism by many Buddhist converts, who are “most eager to apply Buddhist teachings in their collective actions to remedy social injustice and global issues...” (477). Finally, “transference” suggests a process by which white, upper middle class Americans are assigning “repressed emotions and desires for power” onto their experience and image of Buddhism, particularly as it relates to monastic authority (478ff). All of these experiences are creating a very different form of Buddhism in the West, shaping what is coming to be called “modern” Buddhism – a category that is itself not without problems. Other religions covered in this section include Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Mormonism, as well as two chapters on “New Religious Movements.”

At the end of the introduction, the editors offer suggestions for how the handbook might be used. For someone who does not have a particular interest in conversion per se, one option is to read through the chapters on different religions in Part Two. Doing this allows readers to see parallels between different traditions around what conversion means and how it happens (and whether the word should be used at all in the context of a specific religion); and also observe the differences between proselytizing and non-proselytizing religions, for example, and missionary and non-missionary religions. Another option is to focus on Part One, and the different sociological, cultural and anthropological aspects of religious belonging; the chapters in this section examine religious conversion and its relationship to psychology, migration, language, and neuroscience – just to name a few examples. (One of the early chapters in that section is on “Demographics of Religious Conversion,” and the information it offers about data collection and analysis is particularly interesting.) Ultimately, the authors hope that after reading the handbook, the reader will have a better overarching understanding of religious conversion in general.

Why is this important? “Our world is changing at an astonishing pace, and the forces of religious experience, beliefs, and practices empower and inspire millions of people around the world. Other people, however, become disillusioned or are wounded in different ways by the vicissitudes of religious institutions, groups, and institutions.... In either case, the varieties of religious change exert enormous influence over individuals, communities

and the world” (17). It is hard to argue with that assessment, and for that reason, this is a valuable resource for a wide variety of scholarly pursuits.

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The End of White Christian America

Robert P. Jones (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016)

Reviewed by Gilson Waldkoenig

The End of White Christian America is the latest work descended from H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929). Niebuhr showed that race, ethnicity and class were “the skeleton of American religion,” to borrow a phrase Martin Marty used later. Jones acknowledged Niebuhr and drew also on Marty's three-volume *Modern American Religion* (1986, 1991, 1996) which documented mainline Protestant displacement from cultural dominance. A book by Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (1988), was another key predecessor to *The End of White Christian America*. Wuthnow told a story of realignment inside all denominations according to a modernist-fundamentalist polarity.

Technically the title of the book by Jones should have displayed “Protestant” where it said “Christian;” and “further decline” where it said “end.” It also could have said “White Heterosexual Male” where it said “White.” The title is evocative, however, of the statistically-projected end of white majority in the general American population. That will occur in the voting public by 2024, Jones reported, and by 2065 in the overall population.

As compared to the works by Niebuhr, Wuthnow and Marty, the Jones book looked back over Protestant history from a vantage point in the second decade of the 21st century when we now know that almost one-fourth (22%) of the American population has no religious affiliation, and that one-third of those under thirty years of age claim no affiliation. It is that demographic, alongside mainline displacement from its once-upon-a-time centrality, that prompted Jones to reunite the Evangelical and mainline Protestant plots into one “White Christian” tale. Although some would see conflation of distinct religious opponents, those who know and value the longer history of Protestantism would see a plausible patch across divisions which Wuthnow explained but did not claim would last forever.

The Evangelicals are going to come out of a Moral Majority stupor, in the Jones telling, in much smaller numbers but with increased adaptability to social change. Temptation to indulge false consciousness will continue however. The yammer of the “Religious Right” during the Reagan-Bush years was for cultural dominance over-against secularization of the mainline and the wider culture. Many Evangelicals will continue to talk that way,

Jones indicated, but they will increasingly address other Evangelicals alone.

The mainline already moved, Jones said, to acceptance of a public composed of multi-faiths and non-faith. The mainline has declined but has exhibited greater adaptation, Jones argued. Marty said in *Modern American Religion* that the mainline yielded centrality gracefully. One accomplishment of the Jones book is to show part of the effects of healthy adaptation. Yet there is much work to go.

Jones called for integration of churches across racial and denominational lines since the demographics indicate that society will not deliver people into pre-established programs and services. All the “experts” on evangelism and mission that are still calling for numerical rebound of white churches as white churches are indulging another kind of false consciousness, according to Jones.

H. Richard Niebuhr followed *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929) with *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937). The latter brought an interpretive eye to the demographic realities laid bare in *Social Sources*. In *The Kingdom of God* Niebuhr echoed Max Weber on institutions, saying that charisma fueled movements until routinization and procedures corralled the energy. Finishing *The End of White Christian America*, some readers will glance up for a fresh wave of Evangelical, mainline or post-religious fervor, but others will have noticed that Jones highlighted an opportunity that is quite different than the spirit-hopping one finds in *The Kingdom of God in America*. To integrate the segregated, and come to the table from different backgrounds, will bear the Kingdom of God in post-white America.

It was on TV in 1960 that Martin Luther King, Jr., said that “Eleven o’clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America.” He added that de-segregation of the churches – while demanded by Christ – would not come by state imposition. He said it had to come from within. After reading *The End of White Christian America* we can re-affirm that it still must come from within, but there will be more than a nudge from outside. External demographic pressure will prompt and aid the spiritual transformation that has to take place.

Gilson Waldkoenig is Professor of Church in Society in the B.B. Maurer Chair in Town and Country Ministry at Gettysburg Seminary where he directs the Town and Country Church Institute (TCCI) and contributes to the ELCA Rural Ministry Collaboration between Gettysburg, Wartburg and Luther Seminaries. He teaches in the Washington Theological Consortium Certificate in Theology and Ecology. His M.Div. is from Gettysburg Seminary. His Ph.D. is from the University of Chicago.

POETRY + THEOLOGY

Finding the Engine

Katy Giebenhain

Behold David Beckham's torso. The open window has no screens, which means we are not in the U.S. Lean, thoughtful, technically beautiful. The tilt of his open hands, arms straight at his sides and the religious motifs in many of his tattoos warrant going in the direction of incarnation here. But that isn't where we are going.

I'm standing in a former classroom, now an art gallery, for an exhibition of works from 15 international artists at CWC Gallery in the Ehemalige Jüdische Mädchenschule (former Jewish Girl's School)¹ in Berlin. The dark lighting in Nadav Kander's photograph of Beckham and the gentler lighting of the room, with windows to the back courtyard, is slightly rose-colored and inexplicably meditative.

The building, designed by architect Alexander Beer in the functional, Neue Sachlichkeit style² now houses galleries, a museum about the Kennedys, a restaurant, a deli and an architecture firm. It is the site of cultural and arts events in Berlin-Mitte's hip stretch of Auguststrasse. This was the second building for Berlin's first Jewish girl's school. Hebrew and traditional forms of art were taught along with standard subjects. The school closed in June, 1942. Most pupils and teachers were eventually deported to concentration camps.

Looking at Beckham's upper body means looking at his tattoos. I can only see his front, but overall there are tributes to his four children and a "seven" in roman numerals for his Manchester United and England number, a winged cross, an angel, Christ being lifted by cherubs, and texts in different languages. "99" is for the year he married his wife. *The Daily Mail* has published a complete chart of his tattoos (40 and counting).

I hear the engine of a poem. I don't plan on it, but more than one thing comes together. I cannot look at the arms of this footballer and father without thinking of the arms of school girls and teachers tattooed with numbers.

Cataloged and sorted for mass-murder. His tattoos are the very definition of choice. They are body art, curated expressions of his identity. Theirs were the opposite. Ink on skin, but not the same at all.

I'm overwhelmed. These walls held memorizing, concentrating, lunch-time chatter, re-pinning hair barrettes, opening pencil cases, injured bodies and the unspeakable unfolding of events every minute in the streets of Berlin during WWII. The school was used as a military hospital until the end of the War. I am thinking of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik, since Mitte was in post-war East Berlin, and of the building's 1950 re-opening as the Bertolt-Brecht Secondary School. I am thinking about professional sports and the unquenchable, vicarious hunger people have for celebrities in 2016. This corner, with the trees in the open window and David Beckham looking sideways, the quiet and the light is more sacred space than gallery space.

These walls remain as witnesses. They now host and display. As Barbara Franco, founding executive director of the Seminary Ridge Museum says of Schmucker Hall "the building is the main artifact."

Where does a sermon start? Where does a poem start? I don't mean start as in the first lines, but what matters? What sets an idea in motion? Start placing images and events side-by-side, as preachers do with the foundations of a sermon, assembling so that listeners (readers) can fill-in blanks and make it their own. They can take it further. The engine is not the exterior, not upholstery or decoration. It is what we try to locate each time, isn't it? An unexpected source of power. No one wants to read or listen to the equivalent of a car up on cinder blocks. Find the engine. Find what sets it in motion.

Notes

- 1 "Recent Finds" features newer works of 15 international artists September 3-November 12, 2016 at CWC Gallery, Berlin with Anderson & Low, Tina Berning & Michelangelo Di Battista, Michel Comte, Anton Corbijn, Victor Demarchelier, David Drebin, Tom Jacobi, Russell James, Nadav Kander, Robert Polidori, Eugenio Recuenco, Yoram Roth, Martin Schoeller, Albert Watson, and Harf Zimmermann. Visit <http://camerawork.de/en/cwc-gallery>. "David Beckham" is from artist, photographer and director Nadav Kander's "Grids and Panels" series. For more about Kander's work visit www.nadavkander.com.
- 2 For more information about the Ehemalige Jüdische Mädchenschule visit www.maedchenschule.org/en/history.html.
- 3 "They're about the Important People in my Life: A Look Back at David Beckham's 40 Tattoos and the Special Meaning Behind Each Design" *Daily Mail* www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-3185158/A-look-David-Beckham-s-40-tattoos-special-meaning-design.html. Accessed September 10, 2016.

We Welcome our Poets

This issue includes poems by Christine Lincoln (Pennsylvania), Yehoshua November (New Jersey), Gary Fincke (Pennsylvania), Marilyn Chandler McEntyre (California), Judith Kerman (New York), Pamela Cooper-White (New York and Pennsylvania), Ray Gonzalez (Minnesota) and Philip Kolin (Mississippi). Book recommendations are for *True, False, None of the Above* by Marjorie Maddox and *Hagar Poems* by Mohja Kahf.

Book Recommendations

True, False, None of the Above

In her latest collection *True, False, None of the Above* Marjorie Maddox lets us know right away what we are in for. She explores “what it means to write, read and teach literature in a world that – at turns – rejects, embraces, or shrugs indifferently at the spiritual.” Thoughtful and revealing, these poems call out the sharp edges of daily life “unaware of the unexpected / always crashing toward us.” (79).

We ask for help from each other and from God and sometimes mix them up. Maddox brings us the questions and earnest thoroughness of prayer in “My Son Draws a Picture of the Twin Towers Moments Before a New York Yankees Pitcher Crashes His Plane.” She brings Shakespeare into the dentist’s chair and fights with a *Time* magazine quiz in “How Spiritual Are You?”

Tallying twenty *True* or *False*
answers to wishy-washy visions, I’m translated
from a poet of faith into
“a practical empiricist lacking self transcendence”
according to a noted psychologist (2)

There is a very subtle kind of interior and societal assessing throughout the book. What is expected of us? What do we expect from others? How do we internalize the word, from the newspaper to the bible to the blackboard to water-cooler conversation?

“Father’s Day” references a murder-suicide in the news and the strange power headlines can have on us:

Still you read
histories of yourself
in others, those gone wrong
or right, all directions relative
to where you are ... (22)

This collection is very domestic, very worldly, very aware of past voices from St. John of the Cross to Flannery O’Conner.

Marjorie Maddox is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Lock Haven University in Pennsylvania. *True, False, None of the Above* is published by Cascade Books in Eugene, Oregon. Visit www.wipfandstock.com and visit www.marjoriemaddox.com.

Hagar Poems

“Grace has this trick of coming unbidden.” (17) Indeed. In her new book Mohja Kahf gets into that sticky famous-family relationship of Judaism, Christianity and Islam by way of Hajar’s perspectives. This is Abraham, Sarah, Hagar and others like you’ve not seen or heard before. She mixes current U.S. culture with old stories and epigraphs from sacred texts. No matter how far back in time she takes us, Kahf keeps us tethered to the present.

A poem that grabbed me the way I wish every sermon would is “Hajar’s Ram.” Here’s the first stanza:

Ibrahim’s sacrifice of Ismaïl
was averted by a miracle, revealed
to be a temporary trial of his faith,
but Sarah sacrificed Hajar for real
Where was Hajar’s ram?
No divine cavalry galloped over dale
at the eleventh hour to say,
don’t throw her out –
this was a test. This was only
a test. (18)

Where *was* Hajar’s ram? Why don’t we ask? Why do we continue the hierarchies of who and what matters? *Hagar Poems* brings out mutual vulnerability and intertwined fates in poems like “Asiya meets Miriam at the Riverbank.” Reading Kahf is a relief. Thank goodness for “Khadija Gets Her Groove Back” and “The Near Eastern Goddess Alumnae Office...” Thank goodness for this fearless collection.

Gut-wrenching, exploratory and entertaining, Kahf’s poems wind through history, through narratives of the Abrahamic traditions and through voices of “crowds” and power brokers of all times. I keep going back to “Hajar in America” set at an Exxon station in New Jersey. To say these poems remind us how connected we are is an understatement.

Mohja Kahf is a Syrian-American scholar and poet. She is also the author of *E-mails from Scheherazad* and *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. *Hagar Poems* is published by University of Arkansas Press in Fayetteville. Visit www.uapress.com.

Double Seasons

Ray Gonzalez

These are the double seasons of loss, the horizon
where red mountains are old sunsets, the empty truck

swirling down the dirt road, heavy with outlawed cargo.
These are the days of ceremony and holy thoughts,

communion in abandoned churches where horses
and men were destroyed long ago, a legend still untold.

There are two tracks in the sand, one leading north
and one disappearing at the razor wire, graffiti

running down the locked doors, the sound of a lone
whistle shattering the air with the cry to go.

These are guesses and the eternal wish for time,
other desires painting forests on ocean floors.

These are the months of difference,
the begging women chipping away at houses,

hands gripping windows to rescue the dead as they
ask for a prayer without exposing one breast or feeding

The starving dog dropping on the black porch.
These are the double seasons of love and cut flowers,

pollen covering statues of the unknown, buried
family breathing the dusty wind and sleeping as if

two growing seasons, minus the harvests,
are enough to love the earth at any cost.

"Double Seasons" is reprinted with permission from Beautiful Wall by Ray Gonzalez, BOA Editions, Ltd. (Rochester, N.Y.: 2015). Ray Gonzalez is a professor in the M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program at the University of Minnesota. He is the author of ten books of poetry including Faith Run, Consideration of the Guitar, The Religion of Hands (2006 Latino Heritage Award for Best Book of Poetry) and The Heat of Arrivals. Gonzalez has edited numerous anthologies and is the author of two short story collections and books of nonfiction. A long-time teacher and journal editor, his poetry has appeared in The Best American Poetry and The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses. Visit BOA Editions Ltd. at www.boaeditions.org.

Preserving Cursive

Gary Fincke

This late afternoon I am one of three
Supporting the teacher who's advertised
An action group for preserving cursive.
In an adjoining room, a support group
For the parents of daughters with eating
Disorders, those who, hour by hour,
Inspect the penmanship of their bodies
As if they are graded according to
The Peterson Method for perfect script.

As if we are harmless, the teacher turns
Her back to write beautifully upon
The blackboard. Your handwriting reveals you
To the world, she says, and though I believe
What reveals is the exact arrangement
Of the words I choose, I am astonished
By the symmetry of her sample lines.

My grandmother, for years, told me how,
If we concentrated, we would receive
Correspondence from heaven, that the saved
Could be prompted by prayer to send letters
In handwriting we could identify.
My mother, the secretary, could write
Perfectly in longhand and shorthand, loops
And slants exactly the same from message
To message. For decades, she kept the books
For my father's bakery, entering
Purchases in cursive so clear I could,
Ten years after her death, identify
Every product like an auditor.

There is a moment, driving home in rain,
When I wish for the commitment to be
Missionary for anything, even
The antiquated notion of cursive

Or the way the King James Bible sounded
So much like the voice of God because of
The anachronistic and obsolete.

My mother, just hours before her death,
Wrote me a letter running three pages
Before she admitted she'd never felt
So nauseous, acknowledging kidney
Failure in perfect cursive, that letter
Arriving the day after burial
As if it were postmarked from paradise.

For twenty-six years, in calligraphy,
My poem about her death hung framed and
Under glass in my father's living room.
Each time I visited, before he closed
His eyes and faced away, he asked me to
Proofread while he recited thirty-one
Soft lines, confirming one small perfection.

Revelation

The face of Christ has surfaced
 On the inside of the door
 To my father's garage where
 His car has been gone three years,
 Sold and replaced with wishing.
 Only the neighbor who has
 Been hired to cut grass enters,
 raising and lowering
 The door from the outside.
 My father, if he returned
 To driving, would know miracle.
 My father, if he could slip
 His shoes on over ulcers,
 Might reaffirm promise.
 His knees with no cartilage
 Play the bone on bone etudes
 Of pain; his pacemaker keeps
 One thing tuned in his body.
 The face of Christ has waited,
 Now, for two and a half years.
 The lawn boy has traded
 My father's tools for dope, the theft
 As secret as revelation.
 I sit beside my father
 And his elevated legs.
 Nothing in his living room
 Shows a face, not my mother,
 Eighteen years dead, not me
 Or my sister or my children
 Become, this year, the ages
 Of Christ when he preached and died.
 In his bedroom all of us wait,
 Like Christ, to be witnessed,
 But here, his feet wrapped in gauze,
 My father holds out a picture
 Of himself at eighteen, asking,

"Do you believe it's me?"
 and because he refuses
 to tilt that picture up, I kneel
 beside his chair to say "Yes,"
 my father keeping that picture
 faced my way so long, I say "Yes"
 again to ensure he's heard me.

Gary Fincke is the Charles Degenstein Professor of Creative Writing at Susquehanna University. A writer in many genres, some of his awards include the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction, the Ohio State University/The Journal Poetry Prize and the 2015 Elixir Press Fiction Prize. He has published over thirty books. Fincke's work has appeared in such periodicals as Harper's, The Paris Review, The Kenyon Review, The Georgia Review, and Ploughshares. He has been cited fourteen times for a "Notable Essay" in Best American Essays. Visit <http://wvupressonline.com/> and www.jacarpres.com.

Ritual Bath

Judith Kerman

The *mikveh* should be
 blue water reflecting open sky,
 like floating in my mother,
 perfect dependence.
 Not this tiled room
 entered by the rear door
 near the dumpster.
 Remember to breathe,
 remember
 the world outside
 where sunlight has heated
 the cistern on the rooftop
 so this water is almost
 too hot.
 Duck my head seven times.
 Affirm the skin I wear is
 Jewish, always imagine
 dark shadows below the surface,
 piles of bones, piles of hair.
 Duck my head seven times.
 Let it all float away,
 ocean roaring
 in my ears...

"Ritual Bath" is reprinted with permission of the publisher from Aleph, broken: Poems from my Diaspora by Judith Kerman (Frankfort, KY: Broadstone Books, 2016). Kerman is a poet, performer and artist with broad cultural and scholarly interests. She is the author of eight books or chapbooks of poetry. Her poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies including The Bloomsbury Anthology of Contemporary Jewish American Poetry, A Slant of Light: Contemporary Women Writers of the Hudson Valley and Poetry in Michigan / Michigan in Poetry. Kerman is the publisher of Mayapple Press. Visit BroadstoneBooks.com and <https://judithkerman.wordpress.com>.

A Boy Named Tremble

Christine Lincoln

The earth groaned when he cried that first
 born cry, caused time to jump track,
 the world shifted off axis. Never
 did go back to how things used to be.

We marveled at this boy who altered
 rotations as easily as sneezing
 and mountain ranges are disassembled.
 The way he trembled.

They say he shook with burden
 of be
 coming.
 Free.
 Black.
 Man.

Those who once owned boys
 like him saw his trembling called
 it rage. Said he vibrated with anticipation
 of the weight.

So his mother named him Tremble. Would draw
 his name through thick lips in susurration,
 or sometimes evocation a summoning
 of a new spirit, like Jesus,
 only Tremmmmmmmbleeeee.

Each time the earth groaned eager
 for *this* Son of God, this black boy called
 by something as intangible as wind. Grow strong,
 stronger, strong enough to trample mountain peaks
 with bare feet, crush false nations with the snap
 of a finger.

First the milk, then the blood, then the sky.

Self-Portrait

Yehoshua November

Between one and five children
have crawled into your bed
at undetermined hours throughout the night.
You rise and head to the kitchen in darkness,
press the coffee button, wash your hands with the ritual cup,
say the morning blessings, drive off in a modern silver car.

Before morning prayers,
with an accountant,
you study the Chassidic text that claims
God's concealment in this world
is not real,
but more like a lofty idea encloded in a parable
for a simple audience.
God is present just the same
within the finite world. After prayers,

a truck with spiked wheels drifts
into your lane, and you forget what you learned
the previous hour, envision your children
growing up without you,
wife marrying another man.
In a basement office with no windows, a student –
tarantula tattoo climbing down his forearm –
hands you a poem about the things his girlfriend did
with his friend on spring vacation
and asks for suggestions
because he is a deep believer.
You forget you wear a Chassidic beard,
think of yourself, still, as a young man
in a college cafeteria, trying to get the dark-haired stranger
a table away
to look back at you.

In the silver car once more, you listen
to a recorded lecture that claims
God's unseeable Essence is most present
in this lowly realm. Notice the absence
of your E-Z Pass tag as you near the bridge,
reach under your seat, consider a million possible stories
of concealment, find it in the glove compartment
just as you enter the tollbooth. Go E-Z Pass.

The lecture goes on in the background:
In this world, God is just hiding from Himself.
On the Bay Parkway, Chassidic men
walk along the water with their wives.
The sky is orange and red. You think of your own wife
cutting cucumbers for your lunch.
You should thank her, stop off and buy something,
but you'd be late.

The elevator is broken again in the building
the Jewish night college rents from the high school.
Out of breath, you enter the classroom –
walls covered with pictures of Spanish teachers
in sombreros –
to teach poetry to seminary students
in long dark skirts. They are not sure
what to make of you
or their lives. But when you discuss the famous poem
about a father who rises early each morning
to heat the frozen house, one begins to cry.

This morning, the discourse said everything
in this world mirrors and stems from
its spiritual source above,
like signifier linking back to signified.
What does the race through the streets
to beat the men to the bridge

where they work all night
 represent? You park the car,
 walk up the dark pathway to your front door.
 There is light in one window.

A Young Mother Will Pause, Mid-Song

A breeze will move the curtain
 in a window above a crib.
 A young mother will pause, mid-song,
 suddenly realizing
 the infant she sings to
 cannot hear – has never heard –
 her voice.

•

*I remember driving home from the doctor
 with the results of the hearing test,
 you recently said.
 The white envelope occupying
 the empty passenger seat,
 like an undesired verdict resting on a court table.*

•

I held her on my shoulders
 in the apartment parking lot where our neighbors
 had gathered for a communal celebration
 on the festival of *Sukkos*:
 Live music, dancing, skits.
 A friend turned toward me
 to trace the source of the feedback
 echoing from her new, high-powered hearing aids –
 realized the origin, then looked away.

•

With which faces did we greet each other
 in our apartment hallway
 those months of prayers and waiting rooms,
 hoping beyond logic the next expert
 could unlock the mystery –
 the other kids at home, once more,
 with a babysitter,
 outmatched by the evening's homework.

•

Once, I found the year's notebook of poems,
 written in my few spare moments between two jobs,
 cut to pieces under her bed.
 From the bathroom, I heard the loud buzz
 of an electric toothbrush
 she didn't realize she'd left running.

•

I was pulling out of the university parking lot,
 the Eve of Yom Kippur,
 when you called from the audiologist
 to share the news:
The second cochlear implant is working.
She was able to hear my voice.

•

Not working, Mommy,
 she says, when she cannot fly
 despite the *Purim* butterfly costume
 my wife bought for her at K-Mart.

•

Today, I walked into an empty library.
 On a table, a book opened to a page
 on hearing loss –
 no trace of the one
 who'd been reading –
 like a love note left by a stranger
 for someone else who shares your name.

"A Young Mother Will Pause, Mid-Song" and "Self-Portrait" appear with permission of the author from the newly released Two Worlds Exist (Asheville, N.C.: Orison Books, 2016). Yehoshua November teaches at Rutgers University and Touro College. He holds a B.A. from Binghamton University and an M.F.A. from University of Pittsburgh. His first collection, God's Optimism, won the Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award. November's poems have appeared in Prairie Schooner, The Sun, Virginia Quarterly Review, The Writer's Almanac and elsewhere. Visit <http://orisonbooks.com>.

Advent

Pamela Cooper-White

He needed them all.
 He had tried everything:
 The garden of promise,
 The rainbow arching over the second chance,
 The tablets of stone, the smoke and the cloudy fire,
 The slingshot, the armies,
 Even the staying in one place as walls were built and hymns set down,
 The exile, and the rebuilding of ruins,
 The guttering flame on the eighth day.
 But the people did not listen,
 And so he called them out:
 The virgin, her laborer husband,
 The animals with their scented breath,
 The servants who would bring the casks of water,
 The fishermen, and the eager cynic who would climb the tree,
 The woman whose hair swept down below her knees,
 The soldiers who would seize and pierce,
 And when they were all assembled,
 He curled himself into a seed,
 Sent the messenger,
 And waited in the darkness
 For the virgin's 'yes.'

Pamela Cooper-White is Christiane Brooks Johnson Professor of Psychology and Religion at Union Theological Seminary in New York. She holds Ph.D.'s from the Institute for Clinical Social Work, Chicago, and from Harvard University and an M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School. She is the author of five books, including Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons and The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response. Cooper-White is an ordained Episcopal priest and a certified clinical Fellow in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. Learn more at <https://utsnyc.edu/academics/faculty/pamela-cooper-white>.

The Glamour Mass

Philip Kolin

In the days before the Church allowed
 sleeping late on Sundays,
 the 11:15 a.m. Mass was the last outpost
 before you reached the confessional –
Bless me, Father, for I have sinned;
I missed Mass last Sunday because
I overslept.
 In Pilsen, the 11:15 Mass was also known as
 the “Glamour Mass.”
 Women in sleeveless floral
 or polka dot dresses,
 doused in perfume that
 incensed anyone within twenty feet,
 gathered on the steps in front of church
 to preen and be seen. Then they swiveled
 down the main aisle as if it were
 the Miss America runway
 with photographers from *Look* and *Life*,
 their tripods blazing,
 going on a photo shoot safari
 capturing their beauty and grace.

Devotees of St. Maybelline, these ladies’
 faces radiated with enchanting
 touches of roe and turquoise eyeliner.
 They wore the most fashionable hats
 they could find at Leader’s,
 the Pilsen equivalent of Carson Pirie Scott’s.
 Truant boys from the earlier 9:00 a.m.
 Children’s Mass snuck into the choir loft
 with binoculars to ogle them, elegant
 as any of the celebrities checking into
 the Edgewater Beach Hotel on Chicago’s
 Gold Coast back in the ’50’s.

After Mass these Czech *belle dames sans merci*
would collect smiles and winks
from a host of male parishoners
who greeted them with more
than venial sin admiration.

Strange transformations. After Mass,
these same *femme fatales* changed into
frayed house coats, with tears under the arms,
and babushkas, to cook *polevka*,
that onion and garlic soup you could smell
across the neighborhood, and *svíčková*,
with that sickly-looking dill gravy
that reminded us of the water oozing
from the Cal-Sag Industrial Canal.

Philip Kolin is the Distinguished Professor in the College of Arts and Letters at the University of Southern Mississippi where he edits The Southern Quarterly. "The Glamour Mass" is printed with Kolin's permission from Pilsen Snow (Georgetown, Ky.: Finishing Line Press, 2015). He has published extensively on Tennessee Williams, Shakespeare, Edward Albee, Adairienne Kennedy, Suzan-Lori Parks and other playwrights. His most recent poetry collection is Departures. Visit Negative Capability Press www.negativecapabilitypress.org and Finishing Line Press <https://finishinglinepress.com>.

GETTYSBURG SEMINARY FINE ARTS

Shaking the Foundations: Take Two on September 11th

John Spangler

As might be the case more frequently than we know, Sally Stewart began a work of art to facilitate her own healing after the attacks on September 11, 2001. That work found its way into a Seminary Fine Arts exhibit in 2002, marking the first anniversary of the milestone in terrorism. At roughly four feet by four feet, it caused a stir in its first appearance at the Seminary. It was a standout piece in a large exhibit.

Rarely do we get the opportunity to reassess a work of art. But recently, Sally Stewart loaned this multimedia creation to the Seminary for the second time, 14 years later.

Sally Stewart's assemblage "*Out of the Depths I Cry Unto Thee, O Lord*" in wood, steel, paper, paint and textile first appeared in the Seminary art exhibit observing the first anniversary of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. It was back for the beginning of the school year as we observed the 15th anniversary of the attacks. It was the responsibility and the right of the Seminary to recognize the contributions of students and alumni/ae who were present or who served in and close to those key places (Lower Manhattan, NYC; the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania where a newly ordained graduate was in his first weeks at St. Mark Lutheran Church there, ministering to the townspeople and farmers who owned the land where Flight 93 fell.)

This work was the largest and perhaps the most dramatic of the many works on display because it contained burnt wood and steel from the "pile" in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York. A fragment of mangled wood and steel slashes the work in two, breaking up the work like a wound, an open gash. A painted cloth national flag and



"Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee." Mixed media. Sally Stewart.

broken fragments and little blocks of wood come together to depict rather clearly, if ghostly, the gothic arches adorning the lower level of the twin towers. It is dramatic and powerful testimony to the rawness of the attack and the devastation of the aftermath. The wood fragments recreate "the pile" where the tallest buildings in the western hemisphere once stood. A smaller cluster of images recreates the impromptu memorial in Shanksville.

These images were the most striking at the time, only one year after the mid-September day Americans will not soon forget. Under a closer examination, this assemblage pulls together the painted representation of a "missing" poster and fragments of printed office memos in a four foot by four-foot work. We can sense the pile of rubble because it offers a three dimensional pile of wood pieces that explode outward.



Stewart created the World Trade Center towers in wood, with faces and flag superimposed throughout the tower-like building.

presence runs across the highest profile. The prayer posture says "I cry to you" while Paul says God is right here with you. The flag is superimposed over the towers and the most dominant human figure, yet subjected to the gash that runs side to side.

And it brings out the panic and anxiety of those following days. Stewart's answer to this anxiety and fear is a quotation of St. Paul in Romans (chapter 8), that "the powers of hell itself cannot separate us from the love of God." This phrase is painted on burned wood, next to the mangled metal shard. While these words are enough to sow the seeds of hope, the work embraces this tension, even contradiction between the fear and its antidote.

Some might say that the most powerful part of this work of art are the two human figures' carved faces Sally placed in prominent positions. They offer in profile and front view the human cry of fear and devastation. There is a beautiful tension in her work, with the Pauline words painted on the gash of steel. The expressions of fear are everywhere; the assurance of God's presence



Details of Stewart's work pay homage to the memorial at Shanksville, Pennsylvania where flight 93 fell from the sky.

Knowing more about Stewart's works in wood reveal a keen interest in using wood from a wide range of sources. In this project alone, she identified obeche, bubinga, lace, padauk, purpleheart, olive, cherry ebony, mahogany and more in this project. But she has created a tree of 100 woods, and a cross of 100 woods, taking their samples from all over the world. Her use of diversity of woods is one of her slightly abstract ways of underscoring the not so subtle importance of seeing how far and wide her art is intended to reach. Her use of metal and paper in this work were the local connection, the draw to lower Manhattan. But her use of multiplicity of woods is her way of including the globe in this particular. From her artist's statement, she wrote "I wasn't thinking about this at the time, but the wood which formed my rubble pile was from places around the globe.... [and] speak for our international community from which so many nations lost people who worked in the World Trade Center." Even unconsciously, Stewart helped us see this tragedy as something more than just an American thing, the prominence of the U.S. flag notwithstanding. This violence happened against every kind of person, from every conceivable place. It was unexpected, and despite the warnings explored in retrospect, clearly unprepared for it.

So this time around, I see a little more clearly how Sally gives us these two major human figures in different woods, one lighter wood and another dark. It underscores the diversity of all those who cried out that day and in the days that followed. One figure in horror, and the other in prayer. Her woods for carving came from Europe, Asia Africa, Australia and the Middle East, as well as the Americas. And take two also revealed the scores and even

hundreds of people Stewart carved, drew, or painted into the scene. The larger arcs and large motifs have details and depth underneath.

It is a sobering moment to see this work again, perceive its own personal cry, and the raw fear that it captured. It is at once captivating and yet frightening. Some 14 years ago we were asking the question "what will this event and its memories mean for us in the long term?"

It still presents that question, here at year 15, causing me to wonder 'if the seeds of fear that were set on that day have now come to an even greater flower?' Will we be undone by our fears? Will our failure in politics swamp us abroad and at home? Are the foundations shaking? The questions flow again and the answers are unclear.

For the same first anniversary exhibit, Herman Stuempfle wrote a hymn text "When Foundations Sure are Shaken" penning his text in the weeks after the attack, coming to the same conclusion that caused Stewart to quote St. Paul. He brought the hymn to a conclusion observing that "when the powers of chaos threaten, and our trust in [God] is tried, help us hear your certain promise: 'I will not forsake my own!'" Stewart told us that she received suggestions to use more flags, more blackness and more metal in the spaces. But comparably to the hymn writer, Stewart wrote: "We asked 'where was God when this happened to us?' God said, 'right here with you.'"

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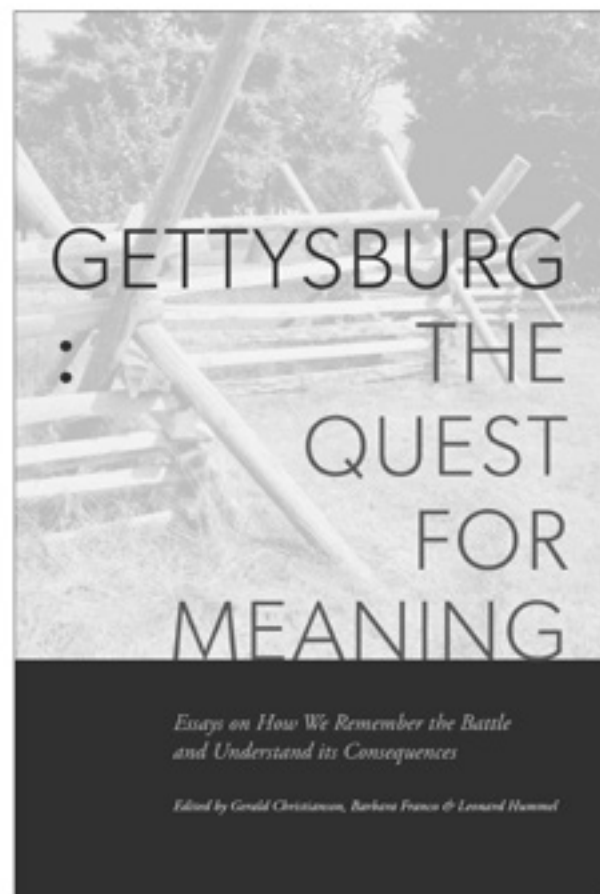
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Encounters with Luther

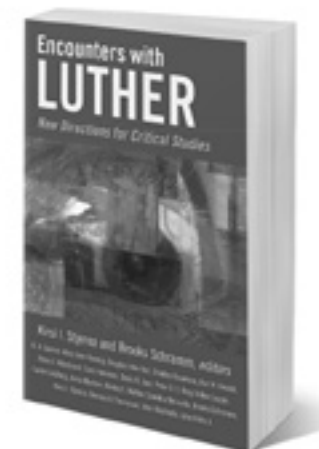
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