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FULLER

THEOLOGY, NEWS & NOTES

| SPRING 2010



Human Flourishing

REFLECTING THE ABUNDANCE OF CREATION

INTEGRATED BY LINDA M. WAGENER, PhD, and RICHARD BEATON, PhD

Flourishing 101 **LINDA M. WAGENER AND RICHARD BEATON**

The Light of God's Love **NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF**

Building Healthy Organizations in which People Can Flourish **RICHARD BEATON AND LINDA M. WAGENER**

Poverty and Human Flourishing **BRYANT L. MYERS**

Spiritual Flourishing and Embodied Life **WARREN S. BROWN AND BRAD D. STRAWN**

A Poetic Theology: What Can Beauty Do for Us? **WILLIAM DYRNES**

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THE MINISTRY OF FULLER

Fuller Theological Seminary, comprised of the Schools of Theology, Psychology, and Intercultural Studies, is an evangelical, multidenominational, international, and multiethnic community dedicated to the preparation of men and women for the manifold ministries of Christ and his Church. Under the authority of Scripture it seeks to fulfill its commitment to ministry through graduate education, professional development, and spiritual formation. In all of its activities, including instruction, nurture, worship, service, research, and publication, Fuller Theological Seminary strives for excellence in the service of Jesus Christ, under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of the Father.

Human Flourishing

REFLECTING THE ABUNDANCE OF CREATION

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES we explore the question of how we ought to live in the light of God's goodness and generosity. A flourishing life is one in which we take full advantage of the physical life on earth that God has given us. We enjoy our capacity to live and move and breathe. We lose ourselves in the beauty of the snow on the mountains, luxuriate in the warmth of hot sand on our skin, are transported to our adolescence by an old, familiar melody. We love, tease, enlighten, support, and confront one another. Even more, we glory in our minds and our abilities to solve complex problems and engage in meaningful work. We create, discover, invent, engineer, build, and worship. All of these things are made possible by our humanness.

The existential and practical question of what constitutes a good life has occupied the minds of humans as long as we have had the capacity to reflect on our place in creation. Positive psychologists, theologians, organizational theorists, ethicists, politicians, architects, artists, and business people all consider the conditions necessary for humanity to reach its fullest capacity. Our intent is to bring these discussions together into a more holistic, integrated understanding that informs a systematic model of what is necessary for humans to be fully alive, fully human in the context of God's abundant creation. Thus we have included essays from diverse disciplines including theology, psychology, sociology, organizational development, neurobiology, and art.

We begin with our own essay, introducing the basic assumptions that underlie our approach to research and practice of human flourishing. We have been studying the concept of flourishing from the perspectives of our disciplines of psychology, organizational development, and biblical studies, but also in the lives of individuals, their families, and organizations. We investigate what it means to live a good life, we define the hallmarks of both flourishing and languishing, and finally invite the reader to consider the conditions that can enhance flourishing.

We include a Fuller Seminary chapel message delivered by Nicholas Wolterstorff on the idea that flourishing as humans derives from the fundamental character of God. He illustrates that fidelity and justice, light and love have their origins in God, and are elemental nutrients that radiate out from God onto and into us, and from us to our neighbors.

In the third essay, we move the discussion of flourishing from an individualistic and private perspective to the public square, with relevance for the many organizations that form the contexts of our lives. Whether in commerce, government, nonprofit work, or congregations, the way organizations are structured impacts well-being. The idea that knowing the characteristics of the leader is sufficient to understanding the broad influence of organizations is challenged by the idea that organizational cultures themselves have defining power.

Bryant Myers considers the question of how the poor and disadvantaged can flourish. The history of the field of international development demonstrates an evolving understanding of the factors that are critical to human well-being. While clean drinking water, nutritious food, shelter, and education ought to be universally enjoyed, it is also true that freedom, dignity, and the opportunity to have a place at the table of global power are critical to flourishing.

Warren Brown and Brad Strawn challenge us to reconceptualize what it means to flourish spiritually. Advances in neuroscience challenge the idea that bodies and souls are separate. If they are one, our spiritual well-being is intimately connected to our physicality, our relationships, and our community. Brown and Strawn also discuss the special case of disability and its relationship to our spiritual flourishing.

We conclude with a reflection by William Dyrness on the connection between goodness and beauty and their origin in the *imago Dei*. He asserts that human identity is formed in an emotively charged context of moral and aesthetic values. He provokes us to think through how artistic images as illustrated in the intertextual dimensions of Scripture help us to awaken us from intrinsically unsatisfying roles and routines to the poetic—in which we can be moved, however imperfectly, toward glimpses of God.

If we take seriously the idea that physical life on earth is part of God's plan for us, then we cannot ignore the social implications. If we want something for ourselves we also want that for others. Flourishing is a lens we can apply to our own lives, families, organizations, and congregations. We hope this series of essays will provoke readers to consider not only their own flourishing but how they can use their resources to contribute to the flourishing of others.

—Richard Beaton and Linda M. Wagener

THE INTEGRATORS

LINDA M. WAGENER, PhD, has twenty-five years of experience in consultation, teaching, administration, and research in human development. She recently left her position as associate dean and faculty member of the School of Psychology at Fuller Seminary to be a founding partner of Marigold Associates and principal of the De Pree Leadership Center. She is a consultant in the areas of leadership assessment and development, personal and executive coaching, family dynamics, and business solutions.

RICHARD BEATON, PhD, has twenty-five years of experience within family business, consumer banking, nonprofit management (Hong Kong), and higher education situations. He has spent his adult life living and working in diverse contexts both in North America and abroad. He is also a founding partner of Marigold Associates and a principal with the Max De Pree Center for Leadership. He provides personal and executive coaching, and consultation on topics such as organizational leadership development and building healthy, diverse organizational cultures.

THE COVER ARTIST: JOHN AUGUST SWANSON

Swanson is noted for his finely detailed, brilliantly colored paintings and original prints. His works are found in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, London's Tate Gallery, and the Vatican Museum's Collection of Modern Religious Art. "Celebration," © 1997, Serigraph 22½ x 30½. www.johnaugustswanson.com



Flourishing 101

I RECENTLY RECEIVED AN email from one of our SOP doctoral students with a link to the National Public Radio series, “This I Believe.”¹ The story of interest was about a six-year-old, Tarak McLean, who had written a list of 100 things that he believed in as fulfillment of an assignment for the 100th day of kindergarten, when all the children were asked to bring in 100 things. Some children brought cotton balls, or cheerios, or crayons. Tarak brought beliefs. His list began:

I believe life is good.
I believe God is in everything.

If we had asked Iraeneus, one of the early fathers of the Christian tradition, to write his version of an essay for “This I Believe,” he might have started with the phrase, “*Gloria*

SYNOPSIS

Integrators Wagener and Beaton give an overview of current thought on flourishing as a standard for measuring human life. In contrast to languishing, flourishing—or as Aristotle called it, *eudaimonia*—is more than mere happiness. A full-bodied embrace of life in all its layers, they assert, is an act of virtuous obedience to God.

Dei, vivens homo,” which is somewhat inelegantly translated as “The glory of God is a human being fully alive.” The question of what it means to be fully alive, and therefore fully human, is a worthy investigation for each generation.

Too often our psychology and our theology have focused on the negative when it comes to thinking about our humanness. Our humanity has been associated with sin, brokenness, mistakes, and failures. We focus on our problems and our capacity for sin, then we work to eliminate them from our lives. Our humanness is associated primarily with the darker side of human nature. We’re more likely to say, “I’m only human” as an excuse for failure, than we are to proclaim confidently: “I’m fully human.” But if we ask what it means to be fully alive against the backdrop of Tarak’s top two beliefs that “Life is good,” and “God is in everything,” we are faced with the positive aspects of our humanity.

Iraeneus is making a strong statement that by being fully human we bring glory to God. Isn’t it sensible that if we are created by God, we ought to embrace our humanness as God’s good creation? Genesis chapter 2 illustrates the great abundance that God intended for us in his original creation. There was nothing stingy in God’s plan. In the garden there was not only sufficiency but abundance and beauty; “every tree that is pleasant to the eye and good for food” (v. 9). In Revelation, the imagery of crystal flowing waters, bountiful crops that never fail but yield fruit each month, trees with leaves for healing, and everlasting light is meant to give us confidence that God has planned for us to be well cared for, to enjoy our physical nature, and to respond to the beauty of creation.

We are reminded that God saw fit to reveal himself as a human being. In the birth of Jesus, heaven and earth were joined in a new creation. It honors God when we embrace the material world and our physicality and live deeply and fully within this creation. For devout first-century Jews, Torah was a pragmatic guide to the simple practices of daily life. Through righteous living they believed they would discover what it meant to be human and could participate in bringing heaven to earth. If all Israel could keep the Torah for one day, it was said, the Age to Come would have begun.

The question of how we ought to live has been an existential as well as practical concern not only for theologians and philosophers, but also for psychologists, sociologists, artists, novelists, and, indeed, all thinking persons. There is a very long tradition within the humanities of thoughtful reflection on this topic. Aristotle wrote about *eudaimonia*, which, loosely translated, means a life well lived. It included the ability to rise to life’s challenges, engage and relate, find fulfillment in creativity and productivity, and make a positive contribution to a harmonious society. Flourishing is a term that is currently popular in both theological and psychological disciplines. In positive psychology, flourishing has been variously thought of as happiness, well-being, or life satisfaction. In theology, flourishing has been used to capture the notion of living fully in the light of God’s generosity. The Christian perspective differs primarily from that of the psy-

chological in the underlying assumption that human flourishing is dependent ultimately on God’s power and not on our own wealth, achievement, or health.²

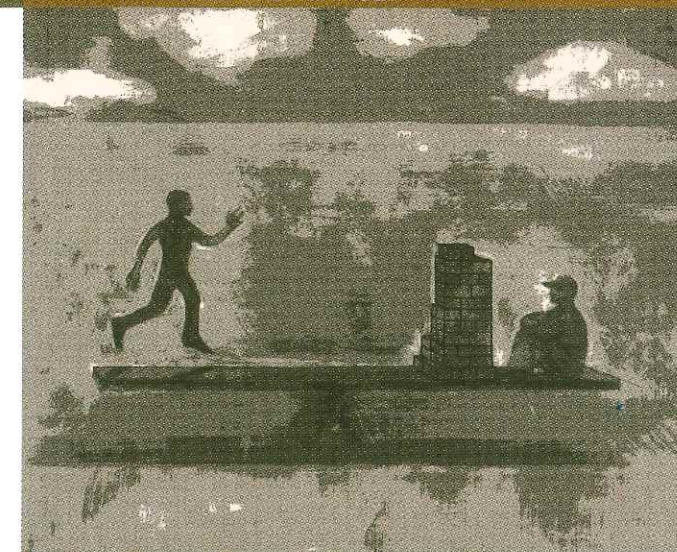
What Does It Mean to Flourish?

Flourishing goes well beyond the idea that we merely exist or survive. It connotes that we are to live in a vigorous state of thriving and prospering. It calls to mind images of luxuriant growth. Flourishing is living life to the fullest. Flourishing persons’ values are integrated and expressed in their personal growth, family life, work, spirituality, and care for others. Though far from being superhuman, flourishing individuals live their lives fully rather than merely existing. At times this is bound to include suffering, mistakes, and even failing. This is why the question of what makes a good life is so complicated. There is no cookbook or formula that can ensure a particular life outcome. Our understanding of what it means to be human is newly interpreted and expanded by advances in research, technology, changing cultural practices, and exposure to diverse cultures.

Within the field of positive psychology, flourishing has been identified with the concept of mental health. Flourishing individuals are those who have positive emotion toward life, including happiness and life satisfaction. They are regularly in good spirits, cheerful, calm, and peaceful. They also function well psychologically—meaning they have self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose, environmental mastery, autonomy, and positive relations with others. In the social realm they have an attitude of acceptance of others, believe that people and society can evolve positively, feel that they can contribute to society, believe that society is logical, predictable, and meaningful, and feel that they belong to a community. Using these criteria, there is reason to have concern about mental health of U.S. adults. Fewer than one quarter of adults (between the ages of 25–74) meet criteria for flourishing.³

Contrast those who are flourishing with those who are languishing in some or most of the areas of their lives. Languishing is considered the absence of mental health and is also the absence of mental illness. It’s more prevalent than major depressive disorder. Those who are languishing are characterized by an absence of positive emotion in life. They are likely to describe their lives as empty or hollow. They are prone to emotional distress such as anxiety or anger, and tend not to function well psychologically or socially. Lacking confidence in themselves, they find social relationships difficult and hold little hope for the social order. Languishing individuals suffer an absence of meaning or sense of purpose and find themselves chronically experiencing negative

IS YOUR LIFE IN BALANCE?



A commitment to human flourishing is based in the belief that an abundant life honors God, in whose image we are made. The following questions may help to identify whether your life is characterized by flourishing or languishing:

- Is your life in balance? Physically? Emotionally? Spiritually?
- Do you have a purpose in life? How would you describe it?
- What dreams have you fulfilled and what dreams still remain?
- Are you excited about learning new things? Are you developing new skills or talents?
- In what ways is your life better than ever? Worse?
- What is your attitude toward the future? Are you looking forward, or are you worried?
- Are you generally optimistic? Grateful?
- What legacy you would like to leave, and are you actively developing it?

thoughts and emotions. Some may simply feel stuck in an unfulfilling job or dysfunctional relationship. Others may be experiencing loneliness, quiet despair, alienation, or negative self-esteem. Languishing is often accompanied by emotional distress, psychosocial impairment, limitations in daily activities, and lost work days.

An excessive focus on work or a life dominated by the accumulation of more “stuff” is another form of languishing. Although people in this group may experience a sense of success and pride in their accomplishments, there are often negative consequences in other areas of their lives such as personal growth, family, and contribution. When and if they take time for reflection they may experience emptiness,

loneliness, or alienation.

There is a theological parallel to languishing as well. Evagrius Ponticus, an early Christian philosopher, identified languishing as the eighth deadly sin.⁵ Acedia is spiritual ennui, apathy, physical idleness, a condition leading to listlessness and want of interest in life.

What Are the Hallmarks of Flourishing?

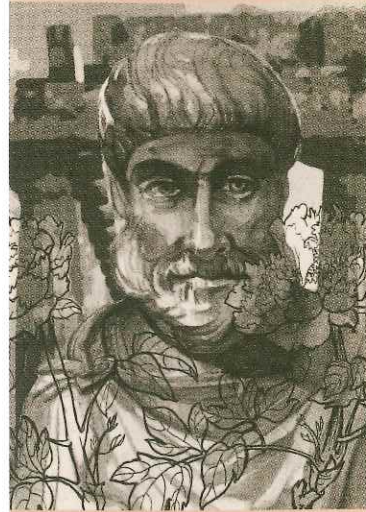
Traditionally, as a society, we have relied on such indices as financial stability, a good marriage, home ownership, and healthy families to indicate flourishing. While these markers do define the good life for some people, we recognize that there are many divergent paths. Our study of individuals who are leading flourishing lives lead us to suggest an alternative grid. We believe that people flourish when their lives have meaning and purpose, when they routinely experience optimism, hope, and gratitude, and when they make a positive impact on others through their work and legacy.

Where do people find meaning? We believe that meaning comes from the awareness that the individual life is part of a larger story. At some point we begin to realize that we are connected to humanity and creation in fundamental ways, that allows us to transcend the limited single self. For many, a sense of meaning comes from spirituality, religion, or life philosophy as the larger questions of life are addressed.

While meaning is the framework in which we understand existence and creation, purpose is what defines our specific role in that larger story of humanity. Flourishing is enabled when we find something to do with our life that is consistent with our beliefs about the meaning of life. For many, their purpose is found in their vocation or for others in their family life. Importantly, purpose is also shaped by the ethics of our life—our character and the moral stance that we take in the world.

One of the characteristics of flourishing individuals is that their emotional life is primarily positive. Even when they experience challenge, adversity, or even trauma they are able to respond resiliently with hope and optimism. This is not to say that there is no room for grief, anger, or frustration. Interestingly, a ratio of three positive emotional experiences for every negative seems to be a tipping point for flourishing. On the other end of the continuum, ratios of more than ten positive for every negative experience seem to be characteristic of people who are in denial about the reality of the human condition.⁶

Flourishing individuals are motivated to contribute to the lives of others because of a deep sense of gratitude for the gifts they have been given. This is in contrast to the attitude of obligation that comes from a sense of guilt, inadequacy,



Fourth-century BC Greek philosopher and scientist Aristotle was the first to write about the human state of *eudaimonia* in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, describing a state of flourishing beyond pleasant amusements or the accumulation of worldly goods. The Greek term literally translates as “the state of having a good indwelling spirit,” so it naturally varies in interpretations. Pointing out

that there is general agreement that “living well and faring well” are equated with being happy, the philosopher goes on to say that “obvious” pursuits of pleasure, wealth, or honour do not necessarily capture the idea’s multilayered meanings. It is considered by Aristotle as the highest good precisely because it permeates—and reflects—all areas of human life. Desirable for its own sake, *eudaimonia* is a virtue arguably consistent with God’s command in Genesis to be fruitful and multiply in the example of the Great Creator; therefore, to pursue a life of flourishing is to live in faithful obedience.

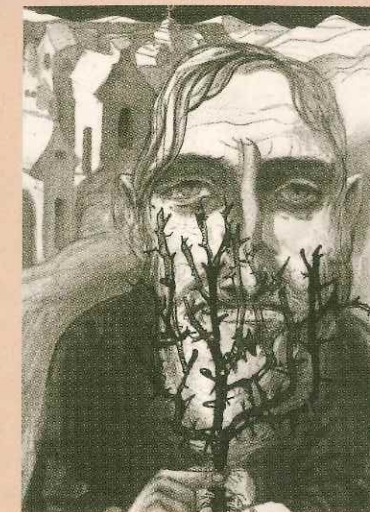
or fear of punishment. Giving to others increases the flourishing of the entire community and leads to a greater sense of well-being for both the giver and the receiver.

A flourishing life results in a positive legacy. We look back at the trail of the footprints that we have left and are satisfied that in the balance we have lived a good life. We have fully experienced our humanity, stretched ourselves to reach our potential, wisely used the resources at our disposal, and been a blessing to those whose lives have touched our own.

What Influences Flourishing?

While it is important to have adequate financial resources, money is not sufficient for a flourishing life. A single-minded focus on the accumulation of wealth is unbalanced and can result in dysfunctional families and personal lives. We are surrounded by a materialist culture that bombards us with the message that money is the most important ingredient in a good life; yet research demonstrates that once we have surpassed the poverty level (meaning that we can provide for the basic needs of life), the ratio of increasing wealth to hap-

In *The Praktikos*, fourth-century Christian monk Evagrius Ponticus wrote of the sin of *acedia*, describing it as the bane of the monk’s afternoon existence—tempting him to feel as though the day “is fifty hours long” and interminably meaningless. This ennui can take a virulent turn, he says, undermining the spiritual life with the aggression of a cancer. Kathleen Norris, in her seminal book *A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer’s Life: Acedia & Me* (Riverhead Books, 2008), says, “Evagrius soon discovers that this seemingly innocuous activity has an alarming and ugly effect, for having stirred up a restlessness that he is unable to shake, the demon taunts him with the thought that his efforts at prayer and contemplation are futile. Life then looms like a prison sentence, day after day of nothingness.” This description of *acedia*—or languishing—correctly identifies it as more than simple listlessness or boredom by unmasking its inevitable drive toward despair.



piness diminishes. Other factors become stronger influences, such as the quality of our relationships, meaningful work, the opportunity to contribute to others, health, freedom, spirituality, and continuing personal growth and development.⁷ (See also Myers, p. 17 of this issue.)

Nor is flourishing simply the pursuit of happiness. There is an important distinction between happiness and flourishing. Happiness, or at least the capacity to experience it regularly, is a partial measure of well-being, but it is a relatively shallow measure. Shallow, because happiness can be a fleeting emotion that is dependent upon a life free of pain, adversity, or even boredom. Adversity and challenge are important ingredients in the development of a quality human being. Thus, using resources to ensure happiness and avoid pain can short-circuit the development of important elements in a flourishing life. Qualities such as resilience and empathy are the result of adversity and pain. A familiar example may help illustrate this. We accept that we need to give our children immunizations throughout their childhood in spite of the fact that shots hurt. We recognize that their bodies need

to combat the virus in a weak form in order to build the capacity to resist the disease in its virulent form. Likewise, in life, we need adversity and challenge to build our capacities, engage our creativity, develop our compassion, and motivate our forward movement.

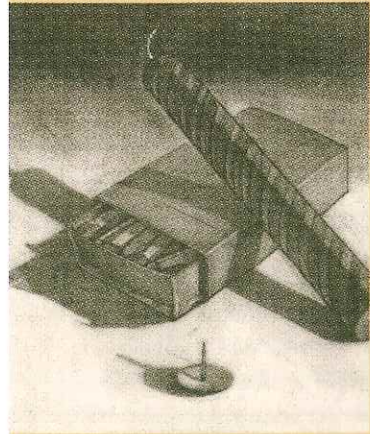
An Ecology of Life

Individual flourishing is supported by certain social conditions. The illusion that we are independent autonomous actors who can control our own destiny is regularly challenged, recently by the ways we were impacted by the financial recession. There are clearly forces far beyond our control that impact personal well-being. People flourish when they have the opportunity to engage in meaningful work, have the freedom to express themselves, can engage in personal growth, have healthy reciprocal relationships, and can contribute to the well-being of others. Economic prosperity, safety, justice, and beauty are elements of society and culture that are ingredients in a flourishing life.

We are all familiar with ponds and the abundant life that is located within them. Scientists have taught us about the careful balance that is necessary to support the rich biodiversity. Pollute the water and the fish, frogs, and plants die. Similarly, human life is a complex ecosystem in which all the parts are dependent upon the other. Change one element and it all changes. This is true in the forests, seas, cities, as well as human communities.

The English poet John Donne is famous for the line “no man is an island.” If human society is likened to a pond, then we may label our lives together as an ecology of living. Fundamental to our understanding about the conditions necessary for humanity to flourish is the fact that we are all interconnected in some way. If this is the case that our neighborhoods, towns, cities, states, countries, and the world are similar to the ecosystem of a pond, then to think about creating a good context for people to live rich, full lives and reach their potential demands a more holistic, systemic approach. It does not make sense to speak about an individual flourishing without asking if their families, communities, organizations, and societies—their ecosystem—are healthy.

If we take seriously the idea that our physical life on earth is part of the intent of God’s plan for us, than we also can never ignore the social implications. If we want something for ourselves, we must also want that for others. The physical life of our brothers and sisters matter. Poverty, abuse, slavery, and other forms of oppression that interfere with any person’s capacity to thrive ought to command our attention. And thus we come to another of the markers of a flourishing life—justice.



Positive Psychology Researcher Barbara Fredrickson has found support for her theory that positive emotions are linked to greater creativity and flexible problem solving.⁹ Unlike negative emotions, which narrow our focus of attention to a specific adaptive action (e.g., fear leads to flight or fight), positive emotions tend to broaden our

repertoire of possible solutions to a problem. Positive emotions make us more open to our environment and aware of our

surroundings, while negative emotions tend to make us reject new experiences in favor of the familiar. Imagine you are sitting at a table holding a candle, a box of matches, and a thumbtack. Your task is to attach the candle to a corkboard hanging on the wall next to the table in a way such that the candle will burn without dripping wax on the table or floor beneath it. Can you think how to solve this problem? In a study by Isen, 75% of the participants who watched a positive-emotion inducing film were able to solve the problem, while only 20% in the neutral-inducing condition and 13% in the negative-emotion condition were able to do so.¹⁰ The next time you are doing something creative, try taking a break to do something that leads to positive emotions. Chances are, you'll find the job much easier!

(Solution: Tack the tray from the matchbox to the corkboard and use it as a shelf for the candle.)

We live in a world of unprecedented economic affluence that has led to increased health and longevity. There have also been remarkable expansions in the establishment of democracy and participatory government as well as access to education, human rights, political liberty, and global networks of commerce, communication, trade, and exchange of ideals and ideas—all unparalleled in human history. Yet, there is still unacceptable deprivation, ignorance, violence, and oppression. Widespread hunger, violation of basic human rights, and environmental degradation can be observed in rich countries as well as poor.

If social conditions are such that people are inhibited or deterred from being able to love God and neighbor, then the common good has not been realized. Not only do our individual lives need to be designed to maximize our capacity to flourish, but also the organizations, communities, and even societies that we influence.

It is interesting that although the original description of God's creation locates us in a garden, the new creation is described as a city. Joel Kotkin, in his book *The City, A Global History*,⁸ has suggested that cities have three core functions: to ensure safety, stimulate commerce, and provide sacred spaces. If our cities are to be places where humans can thrive, we need to attend to each of these.

Part of living life in the foretaste of the New Jerusalem is to pay attention in our lives to the decisions that we make that affect others. Wherever we have influence—in our families, businesses, congregations, communities, even societies—we ought to be using human flourishing as a measure of success. In our congregations, organizations, and businesses, in addition to asking about our productivity, budgets, and profit, we ought to be asking how our practices lead to

greater well-being among our people. We also ought to be seriously considering whether our practices enhance the well-being of our families, neighborhoods, and society. When all are able to flourish, we will feel that we have indeed glorified God with our humanity. ■

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The Light of God's Love

LET ME PREFACE MY meditation with an issue of translation. In the NRSV translation, verse 9 of First John 1 reads as follows: "If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This translation invites the thought that what characterizes God, namely, fidelity and justice, is something different from what God cleanses us from, namely, unrighteousness. But the Greek word translated as "just" is *dikaïos*, and the Greek word translated as "unrighteousness" is *adikias*. The preface "a" in Greek

SYNOPSIS

This essay was first delivered as a guest chapel lecture on the Pasadena campus of Fuller Seminary—part of the inaugural Brehm Lectures on the intersection of worship, theology, and the arts. Here, Wolterstorff expands the idea of flourishing as being filled with light. He points out that Calvin identified light as symbol for the love of God, with John, in his Gospel, arguing that the light of God is manifested in our loving one another.

means the same as the preface "non" in English; in fact, we sometimes substitute the Greek "a" for the English "non"—as in "atemporal." What God cleanses us from is the lack or negation of that very thing which characterizes God. The English translation obscures this identity from us—the identity of that which characterizes God with that whose negation God cleanses us from.

"God is light," says John. In God "there is no darkness at all." No shadows, no dark places. Light everywhere.

A friend of mine, Lee Wandel, teaches Reformation history at the University of Wisconsin. Wandel notes that John Calvin, in a few passages, argues that the best symbol we have for God is light, and the best metaphor, the word "light." Calvin's argument for this position is that light is uncircumscribable. Light has no boundaries that one could draw around, scribe around, circumscribe.

Having noted this claim on Calvin's part about symbolism for the divine, Wandel goes on to argue that Calvin's thought on this matter had a profound influence on Calvinist

church architecture. Most of the early Calvinist churches in central Europe were taken over from the Catholics; it's the later churches which the Calvinists themselves built that she has her eye on. The West Church—Westerkerk—in Amsterdam, for example, and the early Congregational churches in New England.

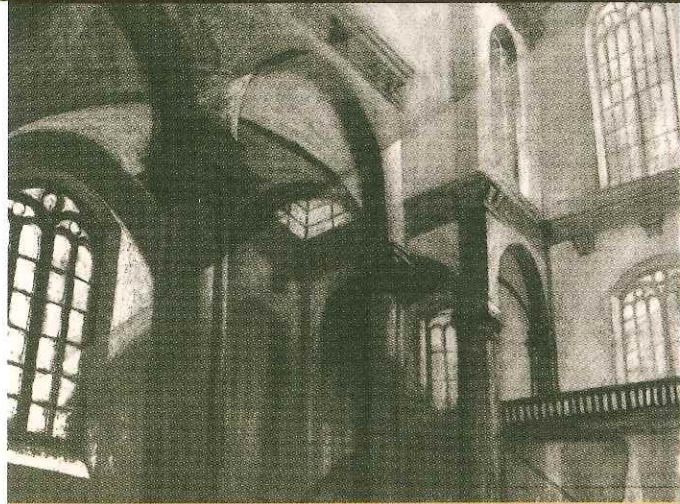
A person familiar with Catholic church buildings will, without even thinking about it, interpret these Calvinist churches as empty—stripped of statuary, of carvings, of paintings, the whole lot. It's all been tossed into a dumpster. The church is bare. Some Calvinist church historians argue, defensively, that this is an exaggeration. Some carvings do remain, on the pulpit, for example; and there is some decorative painting on panels displaying the Ten Commandments.

True enough, says Wandel; but this misses the point in almost ludicrous fashion. These buildings are not empty but full, chock full, full of something else, of course, than statuary, carvings, and paintings. Full of *light*, as chock full of light as a building could be before the days of steel framing.

Some fifteen years ago I served on the building committee of my congregation back in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I was on the subcommittee charged with composing the program for the architect—guidelines for him to follow in the design process. As preparation for our work, our subcommittee visited a number of churches that had recently been built to see what ideas we could glean. In almost every case these new churches were dark inside, the darkness usually alleviated with a shaft of light from a light-scoop. To enter them was to enter darkness.

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is the Noah Porter Professor of Philosophical Theology Emeritus, at Yale University in New Haven, CT. He spent thirty years teaching at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI. In 1993, he gave the Wilde Lectures at Oxford University (published as *Divine Discourse*), and in 1995 he gave the Gifford Lectures at St Andrews University (published as *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology*). He teaches philosophy of religion and aesthetics, and seminars in epistemology, hermeneutics, and philosophy of religion, and is a widely published author. He was president of the American Philosophical Association (Central Division) and of the Society of Christian Philosophers.



The Protestant Westerkerk (meaning “West Church”) in Amsterdam was built between 1620 and 1631, according to the design by Hendrick de Keyser, and boasts the highest church tower in Amsterdam at 279 feet. Artist Rembrandt van Rijn is buried in the church in an unknown location. The Westerkerk is often mentioned in the *Diary of Anne Frank*, as its clock tower could be seen from the attic of the house where she and her family hid from Nazi persecution. Frank described the chiming of the clock as a source of comfort.

At the time I had not yet met Lee Wandel and had not thought about the significance of the fact that the historic Calvinist churches are chock full of light. Nonetheless, I and my fellow committee members felt in our bones that darkness was all wrong. We told our architect that he had to design a building that gave one the sense of coming into the light upon entering. He succeeded admirably.

If one asks what it is about God that Calvin thought light was the most adequate symbol for, the answer is, surely, God’s infinity; the uncircumscribability of light makes it the best symbol available to us for God as infinite. But when John in his First Letter says that God is light, it is not God as infinite he has in mind but God as love. Out of love God has given us a commandment that illumines our way. And that commandment itself speaks of love. We are to love one another. The one who “loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling,” says John. The one who does not love but “hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

I’m sure you are all aware of the fact that this theme, of God as shining a light on our path, and of that light as radiating out from Christ, runs deep in Christian scripture. Matthew quotes Isaiah (9:2) to describe the significance of

the coming of Christ into the world:

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned. (4:16)

And in Luke’s gospel, Zechariah, speaking of the young Jesus, declares that

the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (1:78–79)

But in his First Letter, John is saying something more and something deeper than that the love-command is a light on our path, so that we do not have to stumble and fumble around in the dark, wondering how to live and what to do. John introduces that “something more and something deeper” in chapter 4 by declaring that “God is love.” Earlier he said that God is light; now he says that God is love. Not only is the commandment to love a light on our path that God out of love gives us; God as love is himself light. God is the light of love.

What’s the connection? With his eye on God as love, why would John describe God as light? What do love and light have to do with each other? I daresay that everybody here would say that light goes with love and darkness with hatred. Love, we agree, is bright; hatred is dark. But why? Is it possible to discern why we all think that hatred is dark whereas love is bright and light?

Having declared that God is love, John goes on in chapter 4 to say that

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his own Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. . . . If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Do you see how remarkable this is? God’s love for us takes the form of our loving one another. God’s love *for us* is manifested in *our* loving *each other*. Earlier John said that God’s fidelity and justice toward *each of us* is manifested in God’s forgiving *our* sins and cleaning *us* of *our* wrongdoing. Now he says that God’s *love* for each of us is manifested and perfected in our loving *our brothers and sisters*. God does not only, out of love, give us the love-command as a light on our path in this dark and confusing world, and our

Continued on Page 26



Building Healthy Organizations in which People Can Flourish

A RECENT POLL RETURNED the surprising result that over 60 percent of people were seriously interested in changing their jobs and only 15 percent were fully committed to staying in their current position. This is due to the economy and the treatment of employees and degrading working conditions that the 60 percent observed (see pg. 13). The manner in which layoffs occurred in almost every sector and form of organization provided a visual language about corporate values. The way your colleague has been treated is more than likely how you will be treated as well. We all give

SYNOPSIS

In this essay, Wagener and Beaton propose that the idea of human flourishing ought to be expanded from individuals to the organizations that often claim most of their time and creativity. Bemoaning the lack of resources on the theology of organizational life, the authors suggest that creating organizations—such as businesses, churches, governments, and clubs—in which people can flourish is uniquely suited to the Judeo-Christian theological imagination.

much of our lives to organizations of various types and we all hope for more when we are in them.

This is not surprising since organizations play a significant role in the lives of most of the human population. Organizations are places we invest ourselves for a large part of our lives. We work, develop relationships, use our skills, capacities, even sacrifice our families and future. For this we, in turn, receive something: a salary, an identity, meaning, purpose, and hopefully a place to do meaningful, creative work. Involvements at work, church, nonprofits, government, school boards, clubs, and so on, shape not only our experience of life and society, but also impact our personal growth and development.

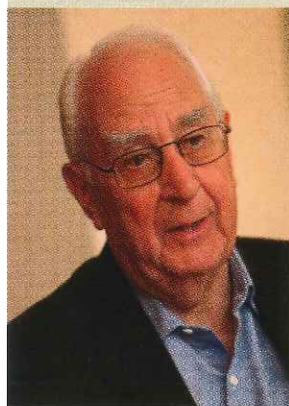
While not a recent phenomenon, organizations have changed much in the modern era, becoming more focused on strategy, mission, and efficiency. But in reality they are made up of people. It is people who do the work within them, people who run them, people who shape them. The human capital present and the responsibility of leadership/manage-

ment for this resource are sobering. It is surprising that as much as people write about leadership, there are virtually no books and few articles specifically written about a theology of organizational life. We are consumed with the leader and his or her growth and capacity and seemingly less than interested in running healthy organizations. This disconnect is an odd one, especially since it is in organizational life that we see our values, beliefs, and practices expressed most vividly.

Organizations today function in a diverse, pluralistic world, and this complex context demands a more thoughtful consideration about what it means to live out one’s faith within the world. As a result, how we understand work and the relationships between the church, believers, and society are also in flux. We are finally moving beyond the notion that calling is reserved for pastors, missionaries, or other such pursuits (as though a vocation and work were lesser things), to a more holistic notion that we can glorify God in the vocations of good work. This is an important shift, since it pushes us towards a more holistic understanding of life, work, faith, and practices. And it forces us to finally begin thinking about a theological view of organizational life and how to participate in, build, manage, and lead it. To do this, we need a more robust theology of humanity—what Max De Pree calls our “concept of persons.”

Thinking Theologically

The Judeo-Christian theological imagination provides several ways into thinking about creating organizations in which people can flourish. The biblical documents do help us a great deal, but perhaps not in the way many of us think. If organizations are fundamentally about people working together to accomplish a mission, then the context we are interested in involves issues that surround being human. Any manager or leader that takes on responsibilities within an organizational context may be swayed by the work of strategy, organizing, problem solving/decision making, delegation, self-management, reporting, or budgeting, but the work has to be done by and through people. Thus, the leader/manager must be a keen student of the human person and be able to create a relationship-based model that promotes optimal human functioning. The Old and New Testaments have



The following is an excerpt from a monograph by Max De Pree, published by the Max De Pree Center for Leadership:

For me, asking the question, "Does leadership have a future?" opens up a large window into the work of leaders, where questions have a special function. It's a great misconception, you know, that leaders have the answers. I can tell you that isn't true. Really

good leaders, I think, have good questions. . . . when I look at what's going on in business and in government and in the church and in education and elsewhere, I think we have problems of ineffective, unprepared, errant, and selfish leaders. If leadership is to have a future, are there questions we need to ask in order to find our way?

Questions are important, but they're not always successful. Even so, leaders have a key role in initiating questions, in inviting questions, in examining questions, and in testing questions.

- Who do we intend to be?
- What is the source of our humanity?
- In the company cafeteria, how good should the bagels be?
- What will I die for?
- Is the behavior of leaders public property?
- What may a leader not delegate?

Even if they don't have all the answers, really good leaders do have stories. Stories help us learn and remember who we are, where we have been, where we are going. Stories preserve our sense of community.

My definition of a leader is a person who has followers. Leaders are those from whom we learn. They influence the setting of a society's agenda. They have visions. They acknowledge the authenticity of persons. They create. Leaders set standards. Leaders are those like Rosa Parks who endow us with surprising legacies. They meet the needs of followers, and their behavior and words positively reinforce the best in our society. Leaders trumpet the breaking up and the breaking down of civility. They offer hope and they say, "There is hope." They are givers and they are takers. They ask the painful and necessary questions. They are those like Mother Theresa who create trust, and they are those who accept responsibility for their own behavior.

Max De Pree was CEO of Herman Miller, Inc., an office furniture company recognized for its people-centered management. The company was one of the most profitable Fortune 500 companies under his leadership, earning De Pree a place in Fortune magazine's National Business Hall of Fame. His many books on leadership, including Leadership is an Art, Leadership Jazz, Leading without Power, and Called to Serve, demonstrate that his theology, more than anything else, has shaped who he is. De Pree served on the Fuller Seminary Board of Trustees for a remarkable forty years, with six as chair. Find out more about the Max De Pree Center for Leadership at www.depree.org.

much to say on the human person, and it is here that they contribute most.

When we think of understanding the human person, Genesis 1:26–29 is an important passage. It contains a rich theological landscape from which to draw. We learn in this text that humanity, men and women equally, have dignity and value, being created in God's image. Similarly, we learn that humanity is given a profound role of responsibility within the created order, to manage it—which one assumes includes human society and the institutions found therein. Thus, part of our mandate is to create healthy systems in which humans can flourish. Paul's understanding of the new creation is similar. His eschatology suggests that the church is to live out the values of the future in the present. If we are a new creation and old things have passed away and all things are new, there is a sense in which the future order has broken into the present. Surely this includes creating organizations that reflect those beliefs, values, and practices.

Genesis 3 chronicles humanity's separation from God, climaxing in the expulsion from the Garden. Paul draws on

this passage for his argument in Romans 1–3, which argues that all humanity is fallen, broken, and separated from God. This situation has sometimes been interpreted too negatively, however, as though little or no goodness or beauty remains in the created order. Quite the contrary. The human person retains the dignity of being made in God's image and is capable of developing in amazing ways. The goodness that God proclaimed at the original creation can be caught in glimpses in a beautiful aria, work of art, nature, and in people fully alive and thriving. This fact alone ought to suggest a different way of being in the world, especially when one also considers the salvation, justice, mercy, and goodness of God. Irenaeus captures this in relationship to humanity in the oft-quoted thought that humanity fully alive honors God, because it is when people's capacity is fully developed and is functioning that their creator is honored. Organizations, leaders, and managers all have a role to play in this regard.

A biblical understanding of the human person teaches that people have tremendous capacity for good and evil. It also suggests that people need to be developed, that we need

accountability, and that we need challenge and adversity in order to grow. This changes our expectations of people and the way in which we manage and construct organizations. But how do we bring this understanding of humanity into public discourse in a pluralistic, diverse society?

The cultural shift we are currently experiencing in the West further complicates the public square and issues of faith and religion, values and beliefs. In early modernism, there was a clear boundary between what was viewed as private and public. Religion, for example, belonged to the private sphere. And as a result, people could be somewhat confused as they walked out their doors to work: Are their values of the family and their faith going to work with them? Or do they become some other person at work? In this new era, people are seeking to live more holistically and integrate their private and public worlds. As a result, their private belief systems and values are increasingly entering organizational life—which makes sense, since they take their whole selves to work. And some organizations are following suit, as they push to maximize human capacity/performance and create healthy, productive workplaces. Management studies are following this trend. Recent issues of the *Harvard Business Review* are implicitly exploring this topic.¹

Organizations have become an important locus of this intersection, especially as they seek to create learning communities that are innovative, creative, efficient, productive, and profitable, but also enhance human capacity and well-being that engenders this productivity and creativity. The message is that one can and must do both. Further, organizations do not exist in a vacuum, rather they are connected to society in very intricate ways both dependent and contributing. This social contract is something that has been resisted, but the work of systems theorists has changed how we think about these matters. As a result, new models of management and organizations need to be rather more sophisticated in their understanding of what it means to be human and what humans need to live productive, healthy, meaningful lives. This should be placed front and center in any discussion of management, organizations, and leadership.

It is at this point that theology and religion have much to contribute. But it is a challenge. It may be that the theological construct of human flourishing provides an important bridge between the two worlds and offers a helpful start in building an ecological model that is sustainable.

Religion in the Public Square

We live in a diverse, pluralistic society in which there are many faiths, belief systems, values, and cultures. Organizations generally reflect this diversity, creating a com-

plex environment in which to work and lead. How we think about the public expression of our belief system becomes very important. If piety is the focus, or the inward journey of the soul, evangelism, and other such pursuits, it creates tension in organizations since these expressions are in competition with other belief systems and behaviors. This is in general why public corporations are scared of religion. We really need a different way of viewing reality than this traditional construct allows. Of necessity it becomes a more practical discussion that revolves around how the mission of the organization can be furthered and the human capital be developed. The esoteric theological discourse, while necessary and interesting, has not helped much. Nor have the many books and talks on a general philosophy of leadership, calling, or other such matters. People need to know how exactly to live, work, and practice their faith in public.

How one understands work and faith, and the content of faith, is vital. In popular Christian literature, faith and work are often at odds. And even among those attempting to bridge the two, there is still talk about the separation of Sunday from Monday to Friday, losing Saturday in the cracks. The implication is that work is part of the curse, and

JOB POLL RESULTS...

The fourth annual survey of job satisfaction conducted by Salary.com in 2009 revealed that 65% of employed survey respondents said they are looking for different jobs (up more than 17%); 60% said they plan to intensify a job search despite the economy; 65% were "somewhat satisfied," but only 15% were extremely satisfied. Online public membership organization Conference Board reports in January of 2010 that job satisfaction in the U.S. is at its lowest level in two decades since the first year in which their survey was conducted.

something we can hopefully lose in our spiritual existence in eternity with God. Included in this struggle is tension with the material world. We have resorted to having to label the various domains a calling, much like a pastor's call to the ministry. This re-sacrilizing of the public sphere seems at times an attempt to bring meaning into people's daily mundane existence, who were not fortunate to be called into the ministry. It might be easier to argue that all work is sacred and part of God's design in creation and that it does not need to be designated a calling, high or otherwise. Rather, it is part of our earthly sojourn that can be very meaningful when it taps into our capacities. The Flow research and

the Good Work project provide the evidence that work can be meaningful when it is excellent, socially responsible, and engaging.² To flourish as individuals, we need to tap into these resources and organizations if we seek to maximize human capital.

Many have now suggested that Western Christianity has become fundamentally gnostic or neo-platonist, in the sense that it focuses upon a dualism that emphasizes the spiritual at the expense of the physical, material world. If one listens to sermons and popular language, much of it emphasizes devotion, pietism, living apart from the world. Yet, we have bodies, we work in the physical world, we participate in culture and society for work, income, and other such things. Human flourishing as a construct seeks to bring these together in a more holistic fashion. The tension between the two is obvious, as more than one conservative evangelical author/preacher has opined that the new emphasis in human flourishing is nothing more than a renewal of the onslaught of "humanism" upon the gospel and church. This challenge reveals more than it realizes. It demonstrates their antipathy for and defensive struggle with broader culture, the spiritual vs. material separation, and a very negative view of humanity. Warren Brown's essay in this volume gets at this issue of embodiment and physicality through the intriguing work being done in the neurosciences and cognitive linguistics.

If we accept human flourishing as a way of constructing reality, then we need to articulate a theology of being human and the basics for a meaningful life. There is not room to argue the case in this short essay, but we think that people, once they are more integrated, will understand their work, play, and faith as a single piece that is an important part of their personal development and growth, their relationships, and contributions. They are living out their lives to the glory of God in the midst of the world. And as a result, they are becoming more self-aware, and growing and developing through education, experiences, and encounters with others.

In public discourse it is important to find areas of common ground and contribute to practices that support the construction of society. While we might disagree on the nature or origins of humanity, we can agree that we all seek to contribute to building a good society in which people can reach and express their full capacity. A reading of Genesis 1:26–27 and Paul's understanding of new creation both point in this direction. In order to do this, however, we need coherence between message and practice. The organizational culture and values that result in both corporate and individual behavior make powerful statements about core beliefs and values. How this works out in practical terms is developed in the section that follows.

Human Flourishing and Organizations

The work context is core to the capacity of people to flourish. Beyond the simple fact that we spend so many hours of each week at work, much of our identity as humans is tied up in the nature of the work we do. Three elements of work seem to be particularly related to flourishing: Work that enables people to perform to high standards, requires their full capacity and resources, and is socially responsible is linked to the construction of a meaningful life. Managers who are concerned about both the productivity and the well-being of their teams will recognize the win-win nature of emphasizing these three dimensions. How then is it possible to develop people so that they improve in these areas of excellence, ethics, and engagement?

Having argued that a theology of what it means to be human has a place in the public square, we now turn our attention to issues of practical implementation. In what remains of this essay, we will explore five specific areas in which our humanness needs to be incorporated into how we shape and run organizations. These include being known, communication, scaffolding, autonomy and accountability, and the problem of entropy. Attending to these dimensions of the workplace will enhance the capacity of organizations to be more intentional about developing their human capital and ultimately to prosper.

Being Known: Intimacy

Too often all we see of the people who are part of an organization are the ways they fit the job they were hired to do. We hire or incorporate people into organizations based upon need and function. They may have an MD, but if they are hired to photocopy, that's all they are expected to do. When people in organizations are typecast like actors and limited in their opportunity to contribute to much-needed creativity and innovation, the result is amazing underutilization of human capital. Theologically, the challenge in the Garden to steward creation includes organizational life. Leadership/management has a responsibility before God for not just the organization, but also the various people in their care. For people to flourish in an organization, we need to create structured ways through which to know and understand the potential of each member of the team. It's essential as well to provide structures, systems, and processes for them to be developed and promoted. Giving even a very gifted employee too much responsibility without support and training is risky at best.

Leadership and management need an additional set of sensibilities and skills to care for those in their organizations. The rapidly changing technological, global, and diverse



Robert W. Lane, chairman of the board of agricultural manufacturing corporation Deere and Company, spoke as part of the Max and Esther De Pree Presidential Leadership Lecture series. Reflecting on his own theology of leadership during his career with John Deere, Lane emphasized that his role as a business leader in a capitalist economic system required the

ability to see Kingdom potential in the marketplace.

Lane shared the ways in which he was privileged to be like Timothy, having parents and grandparents who followed the Lord in faith and in study and understanding of the Scriptures. "These words become fresh every day, and it's this freshness that I sought to bring into my workplace," he said. Lane was strongly influenced in his own leadership development by his days as a student at Wheaton College and by two pastoral mentors, Anglican rector John Stott and Wheaton College philosophy professor Arthur Holmes.

The changes Lane has brought about as chairman of Deere and Company are focused around four themes: high aspirations, seeking to create not just "good products" but a "great business"; gritty ethics, teaching everyone in the company that John Deere will strive to do business in the most transparent

marketplace requires a toolset of leadership skills that include direct, instrumental, and relational skills.³ Younger workers of the Gen-X and Millennial generations expect and thrive in lateral rather than vertical structures. Drucker saw this when he argued that workers must be led and not managed. In order to maximize what they bring to an organization, leaders need to know their people much better than before. Failure to know their human capital, that is, the capacity, character, and competence of people, is as risky as failing to understand their financial capital. It places the organization's mission in jeopardy. Understanding the human side of the organization requires high emotional and social intelligence in addition to the specialized competencies related to the mission of the organization.⁴

Communication

In order to protect and develop the human capital of an organization there must be explicit processes, policies, and strategies for performance review, supervision, training, and delegation of new responsibilities. These policies must be accurately understood throughout the organization. The suc-

cess of each of these processes depends on effective communication. Professional and personal boundaries are protected by clarity, transparency, and practices that are coherent with the verbal and written statements. Job descriptions, compensation, promotion policies, and expectations for performance ought to be communicated in a direct and clear manner. There should be no surprises when it comes time to fire, promote, or reward any member of an organization.

While Lane demonstrated the importance of thinking innovatively and communicating clear values to bring about lasting positive change within a corporation, he added that what his company does is important for generations to come. When employees see their everyday work not just as assembling a tractor, but as building a lasting business that serves to feed coming generations, he said, their work affirms goodness in the world God has created. As Lane learned from his mentors, "God loves matter; he made it." We must, therefore, seek an integrated worldview where all the families of the earth might be blessed. He compared the Christian mission in the world to "the kind of work that is not seen, but comes through in someone in the far reaches of Kazakhstan receiving a really good product with which to seed their land." This concern for the common good has influenced Lane's commitment to a model of leadership that has human flourishing as its core purpose.

Robert Lane, who joined John Deere in 1982, has served as chairman of the board since 2000 and was also chief executive officer for nine years. For more on Lane, or the lecture series, see www.fuller.edu/tlnn.

Thanks to MDiv student Dawn Miller for this report.

The nonverbal side of communication is equally important in shaping the people and culture. Whether conscious or unconscious, coherence between the practices and stated values of an organization speaks volumes. When verbal communication is at odds with real practices, policies, and values, organizations can be places in which mistrust and dishonesty come to rule. Passive aggressive communication practices such as gossip and triangulation are signs of toxicity. At times, these indirect forms of communication can stem from values that otherwise seem to be positive. For example, in an attempt to be nice or out of a fear of hurting feelings, people may fail to directly communicate about problem behavior.

To this point, we have been discussing primarily the



contractual aspects of organizations. However, there is also a covenantal aspect to communication that stems from a theological understanding of human dignity. All persons being created in God's image are equal before God and are owed justice and respect. They ought to also be accorded the opportunity to speak with honesty and integrity without fear of retribution.

There is a link between good communication, the affirmation of a person's dignity, the development of people, creating a healthy organizational culture, and the values of the people of God. Christians are not the only ones who share these values, but they are central to the Christian belief system. Part of the broader goal for the people of God ought to be the construction of a good society. A just, peaceable society is good for everyone and consistent with the gospel.

Scaffolding: How to Develop People

Rarely do managers receive formal training in mentoring processes, which include supervision, performance review, and delegating responsibility to others. All of these routine managerial activities are opportunities to increase the human resources of organizations by developing the gifts and capacities of team members.

As background, it is perhaps helpful to think about the components that go into a good mentoring relationship in which a more experienced person takes on the role of helping another develop in a specific domain. Of primary importance are the advanced competencies of the mentor. They have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are not yet fully matured in the other. They must also have sufficient awareness of the proficiency level of the person whom they are encouraging. Finally, they must be able to form a bridge between their own level of performance and that of the junior team member. The concept of scaffolding is a useful metaphor for describing the temporary support that more experienced players provide as others gain the skills needed to take on additional role assignments. Note that scaffolding is meant to be a temporary support structure that is gradually dismantled as the skill is constructed. Through the provision of sufficient support during the construction phase, the less-experienced team member is more likely to experience success and less likely to make a serious mistake.

For those invested in developing themselves, being mentored is a unique relational experience that adds dimensionality to our human experience. There are attitudes and behaviors that can enhance the mentoring relationship. These include letting ourselves be known; openness to feedback; actively pursuing what we need; and expressing our gratitude to those who give us the gift of their mentoring attention.⁵

Autonomy and Accountability

There is a delicate balance in organizations between giving people space to exercise their autonomy and providing appropriate oversight and accountability. When the sweet spot is found, good work is the result; both in its excellence and in its ethics. Organizational cultures vary in their ability to tolerate mistakes. Highly creative and innovative cultures by necessity need to be able to follow rabbit trails that will often lead nowhere. On the other hand, assembly line production depends upon precision and exact replication of each step in the process. Accountability serves to protect both individuals and the organization from mistakes but also, stated more positively, allows them to continue to develop and improve.

Entropy

If we accept that people have limitations and a capacity for sin (broadly defined), then the natural pattern of human performance is not towards excellence but mediocrity. Challenge, adversity, and even suffering are essential for healthy growth, though we don't normally seek them out. Entropy is difficult to keep at bay.

To maintain a flourishing organization, leadership needs to be fully aware of the human factor. Rather than looking for entrepreneurial keys, leadership models, and other such things in Scripture, a reading that informs our theological imagination and allows us to participate in a constructive manner to the construction of healthy organizations, their systems, processes and practices, and ultimately to a good society is what we need. Granted this is a more challenging model, but ultimately it is more satisfying. Stewardship involves more than money and ideas, it also involves the immense human capital that is part of every organization. ■

ENDNOTES

1. Harvard Business Review, <http://hbr.org>.
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4. D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* (New York: Bantam, 2002).
5. J. Nakamura and M. Csikszentmihalyi, "The Construction of Meaning through Vital Engagement," in *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well-Lived*, by C. M. Keyes and J. Haidt (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003), 83-104.

Poverty and Human Flourishing

*Our life is empty and we are empty handed.
We are above the dead and below the living.*
—Poor women and men in Ethiopia
(Narayan-Parker 2000, 33)

AT FIRST GLANCE, POVERTY makes human flourishing difficult, if not impossible. Few would argue against the thesis that extreme material poverty places sharp limits on the ability of any human being to flourish. Children without enough of the right food to eat, without schools

SYNOPSIS

Myers suggests that stereotypes about the poor not only incorrectly inform definitions about development, but also form inadequate strategies to improve the chances for flourishing. Theories and outcomes based on economic success alone crippled early development practices until new standards developed in the 1990s became people-centered instead. When the poor were surveyed for their own thoughts on flourishing, surprising insights resulted.

to go to, with dirty drinking water that makes them sick, with few job opportunities to hope for, are children whose potential for human well-being is surely problematic.

Yet to know poor people as persons and friends is to know that there is also joy, caring, sharing, and happiness in the midst of poverty. "Of course, Port-au-Prince has fallen down and, of course, people are hurt, hungry, and dying, but do not speak of we Haitians as broken and beaten down. We are the most resilient people on earth. We do not give up and we can always find joy," a Haitian Fuller student reminded us as we agonized over the aftermath of January's devastating earthquake in Haiti.

The purpose of this short essay is to explore the idea that there is more to the story of poverty and human flourishing than meets the eye. With the intention of provoking new thinking rather than providing answers, I will consider the subject from a number of angles: first, I will trace the history of thinking about development as a response to poverty; second, I will look at what the poor have to say about their

lives as expressed in the *Voices of the Poor* study funded by the World Bank; and finally, I will make some observations intended to further the conversation on human well-being.

Evolution of an Idea

Development, as a word to describe efforts to improve the well-being of the poor, was used for the first time in the early 1950s during a time when the gap between a rich and developing West and the rest of the world was increasingly hard to ignore. It was the aftermath of the devastation of World War II; Europe had been rebuilt and was taking off economically; and the pressure to award independence to former colonies was undeniable. At the same time, soldiers had been all over the world as had the war correspondents. Radio and then television began to beam the words and images of very poor, yet far off places into the homes of those living in the West. With the emergence of the Cold War, the East and the West began competing for the allegiance of the so-called Non-Aligned Nations in the South. Sometimes this meant guns and proxy wars; sometimes this came in the form of development aid. It's instructive to remember that development in the 1960s was not altogether altruistic.

But what is development? The West was not sure. The West understood itself as "developed" but was not entirely clear how this happened—and was still shaken by the fact that its development had included two world wars, a global economic depression, and a holocaust. Regardless, the underlying assumption was taken as a given: The

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“underdeveloped” world will “develop” by emulating the path of the West. Walt Rostow provided his interpretation of how the West had developed and his five stages of economic growth, “non-Communist manifesto,” which became the blueprint for Western development (Rostow 1960). The goal of development became “modernization” and its measure was the size of one’s economy. Causing economies to grow was the means of development.

While Modernization Theory held sway for awhile, it eventually lost its luster for the culturally and economically myopic creation that it was. Other theories emerged. Dependency Theory, with Marxist roots, argued that the West was the source of the underdevelopment of the Third World and that Modernization was just a fig leaf to cover up this unchanging colonial, capitalist reality. The goal of development was still economic growth, but the means of development was a choice: Marxist or capitalist economics.

In the 1980s, development practitioners, weary of global wars over economic theory, began articulating an approach to “people-centered” development, derived from what they had been learning on the frontlines. As increasingly the idea of development as economics alone was called into question, alternative, small theories—limited by time and place—began to emerge.

A Shift in Measures of Development

Robert Chambers, a research associate of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, with long field experience in rural India and Africa, argued for an understanding of poverty as entangling systems and a system response that focused on what he called responsible well-being (Chambers 1984,37; 1997,10). John Friedmann, a professor of urban planning with extensive Latin American experience, insisted that, while the kind of programming that Chambers argued for was needed, it was not enough. For Friedmann, poor households lacked the social and political power to develop themselves (Friedmann 1992). What was needed was to organize the poor into associations and networks that would make them increasingly hard to ignore as important players in civil society; only then could the poor push back against the political and economic systems that limited their initiative. Issues of access, vulnerability, and social power became more central to the development conversation, yet the central measure remained the size of the national economy.

Finally in the 1990s, there was a shift in measures of development. A development economist from India, Amartya Sen, began working with Mahbub ul Haq, a Pakistani economist in the United Nations Development Program, to

create a new index for assessing levels of development with the declared purpose of moving development economics from its focus on Gross Domestic Product to more people-centered policies. The resulting Human Development Index added life expectancy, as an indicator for health, and literacy, as an indicator for knowledge and education, to Gross Domestic Product as a measure of standard of living. In time, this shift in the measurement of development began to result in a shift in the way development projects were designed.

Sen had also studied the relationship between famines and democracy—there has never been a major famine in a functioning democracy (Sen 1999: 16). In his seminal book, *Development as Freedom*, Sen announced his conclusion that poverty is the result of deprivation of human freedom. Things like low income, lack of education, ill health, lack of access make people less free. But so does lack of freedom in the form of restrictions on political and civil liberties and participation (Sen 1999, 4).

What people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives (Sen 1999, 5).

Sen went on to argue that not only is freedom, or empowered human agency, a *goal* of development, freedom must also be the *means* of development. For Sen, the ultimate goal is for human beings to have the capability (freedom) to seek functions in their world that the people themselves deem valuable. The goal of development is to create the environment and conditions in which every person has the freedom to seek the better human future they desire. For this work, Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics.

With the broad acceptance of Sen’s approach, the size of an economy is correctly made a means, not an end. The purpose of wealth is not to have wealth, but to enable the person or household to pursue the kinds of things they have reason to value (Sen 1999, 14). No longer is the development ideal that of Western modernization. The understanding and pursuit of well-being is to come from the poor themselves.

The general acceptance of Sen’s argument has transformed the development conversation. Economics has found its proper, more incidental place as a new multidimensional understanding of development that now includes empowered human agency and what Sen calls the instrumental freedoms: Civil liberties and political freedom, economic opportunities and entitlements, social opportunities afforded by education and provision of health care, transparency guarantees that guarantee openness, trust and the exposure of corruption, and protective security in



The World-Bank-funded research initiative called *Voices of the Poor*, surveyed 60,000 poor women and men from 60 countries, in an unprecedented effort to understand poverty for the new millennium. Believing that “poor people are the true poverty experts,” researchers asked questions such as: *What is a good life and a bad life? What are poor people’s priorities? What is the nature and quality of poor people’s interactions with state, market and civil society institutions? How have gender and social relations changed over time?* They learned that poverty is multidimensional and complex, and includes elements beyond basic lack of food, shelter, and education. Poverty, the results show, includes voicelessness, powerlessness, insecurity, and humiliation.

the form of a social safety net and a sense of personal safety (Sen 1999, 38–40).

From a model of development based on emulating the West measured by the size of one’s economy, the development community is in a very different place in 2010. For the last decade, the language of human well-being has become normative. The struggle now is to figure out what human well-being actually is. The development conversation may now be ready to join the other conversations on human flourishing.

Voices of the Poor

Well-being is a full stomach, time for prayer, and a bamboo platform to sleep on.

—a poor woman in Bangladesh
(Narayan-Parker 2000, 234)

After a decade of hectoring by NGOs and development academics, the World Bank began to wonder if the bank, full of economists and funded by the world’s wealthiest countries, might be a little too far-removed from the real

world of the poor. A team of researchers were sent out to listen to over 60,000 of the world’s poorest people. In early 2000s, the *Voices of the Poor* project published three books with their findings (Narayan-Parker 2000).

In addition to listening to the poor speak about how poverty, oppression, and injustice were negatively affecting their lives, questions were also included about what the poor believed human well-being might be. As one might expect, more food, better health, and access to education quickly made the list. Human well-being without the basics of survival is impossible to imagine. More surprising was the finding that having enough materially for a good life does not mean asking for very much. The material desires of the poor are modest: “But at least for each child to have a bed, a pair of shoes, a canopy over their heads, two sheets—not to sleep like we do on the ground” (2000, 25).

But the conversation quickly moved beyond these more obvious material desires. Many of the expressions of well-being were relational; social well-being seems central to human well-being for the poor (2000, 26). The desire to take care of one’s family, harmony within the family and community, having friends, and helping others showed up with regularity in the interviews.

Less expected by the researchers, many of the manifestations of well-being were psychological in nature (2000, 26–27). A desire to feel better about oneself and a wish for a sense of dignity and respect were heard. Peace of mind, lack of anxiety, being God-fearing, happiness or satisfaction with life were named as elements of human well-being. Somewhat to the surprise of the Western researchers, “a spiritual life and religious observance are woven into other aspects of well being” (2000, 38), although these religious findings were quickly recomposed into the more normative secular category of “psychology.”

This essay began relating the evolution and reframing of the idea of development. This conversation was primarily among academics from the North, eventually joined with practitioners and academics from the South. It was not until the late 1990s that some began to wonder if listening to the poor articulate their own descriptions of poverty and human well-being might be a useful counterpoint. A tip of the hat must go to Robert Chambers for provoking the World Bank and to the bank’s mercurial and paradoxical president, James Wolfensohn, for having the courage to incur the wrath and puzzlement of his own economists and funding the study anyway.

Reflections

First, there is a need to state the obvious. The development

conversation and its contemporary explorations of human well-being are products of modernity more than anything else. The myth of human progress seems untarnished by the continuing presence of violence and poverty around the world. There is no need for the transcendent, it would seem. We clever human folk just need to apply our reason and our scientific observations to the problem of poverty and its solution is within our grasp. With the exception of what the poor say about their vision of human well-being, God is not part of the Western vision. Yet, as both evangelicals and Catholics alike have warned, human well-being disconnected from God simply does not lead to well-being. We need to inject this view into the larger development conversation.

Second, it seems pretty clear that the development conversation is not over. The distance traveled in sixty years, and the nature of the reinvention of ideas and approaches, suggests there is more to learn about both the purpose and means of development. The development conversation has not generally involved the domains of psychology and religion/spirituality. Until the last seven years or so, religion was considered part of the problem and thus surely not a part of the solution. This is changing¹ and the door is opening to allow people to speak from religious perspectives.

Third, the topic of human well-being is the focus of conversations in a variety of heretofore disconnected domains. Human flourishing, positive psychology, and community psychology have been gaining momentum and recognition of their importance within the domain of psychology. Happiness, in the sense of having a positive view of one's life, is now a topic of growing interest in economics. The continuing extension of Amartya Sen's work with Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum and Sen 1993) is focusing on a holistic or comprehensive view of human well-being. Development researchers are creating tools to measure well-being in development practice (White 2009).

Even theologians are getting into the act. InterVarsity held a conference on human flourishing in 2008. Miroslav Volf, David Kelsey, and John Hare are overseeing a research project at Yale on "God and human flourishing." Nicholas Wolterstorff's recent book, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* makes useful distinctions between the contemporary utilitarian idea of an "experientially satisfying life," the "life well lived" of Aristotle and others of ancient Greece, and what Wolterstorff calls "the life that is both well-lived and that goes well" (Wolterstorff 2008). This formulation of human well-being unites the human capabilities and agency dimension—humans should be able to enjoy a life worth living and to pursue the ends of that life that they desire and to be the recipient of the conditions that allow such a life—

right kinds of relationships.

There is an urgent need for multidisciplinary conversations among these traditional academic silos. The poor require it of us.

Finally, I want to return to Sen's idea of human freedom being at the heart of the development conversation. Sen is talking about the idea of human agency, about the freedom each human being inherently has to work toward a better human future. While Sen is not working from a Christian frame, this is nonetheless a theologically sound position. It is at the heart of the idea of the *imago Dei* and of the gospel. But the freedom that God grants to us, a freedom to tell God we don't believe in him if that is our choice, is not the unlimited freedom of the autonomous Western self. It is a freedom to give up some of our freedom because we can better love God and our neighbor when we do. This is a second major front in the development conversation to which the Christian development community has something to offer. ■

ENDNOTES

1. It is encouraging to note that a few secular development thinkers have begun to reexamine the modern orthodoxy that relegates religion to the private and personal realm. There have been a number of good studies on religion and development in the field. A brave new book argues that religion cannot be separated from development, that Christianity and Islam are inherently developmental, and it calls for a rewriting of the secular development script (Deneulin & Bano 2009).

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Spiritual Flourishing and Embodied Life

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR a person to flourish spiritually? Would it be different from other forms of flourishing—physical, social, economic, or emotional? Answers to these questions seem, at first, to be rather straightforward. We each have some notion of what it means to flourish spiritually—to be in a state of spiritual blessing. Many believe that *spiritual* flourishing is (or at least should be) relatively independent of physical health, the quality of relationships, economic distress, and the presence of happiness or depression.

SYNOPSIS

Brown and Strawn challenge the prevailing evangelical Christian perspective that humans are composed of two separate parts—body and soul. They assert that the two are one, and that an investigation of human flourishing must address human life as such. The implication is a spiritual flourishing that is not inward, individualistic, and subjective, but outward, communal, and objective—marked, they say, by a Kingdom life.

However, when thought about more deeply and beyond the boundaries of our habitual categories, the answers to these questions begin to push on our presuppositions about the nature of persons, as well as what constitutes "spirituality." Consideration of human spiritual flourishing presumes some view of human nature. When we begin with different ideas about the nature of persons, we end up at different places with respect to spiritual flourishing.

From the time of the Greek philosophers, throughout two millennia of Christian theology, and up to present discussions of the relationship between religion and human neuroscience, two major views have vied for predominance: body-soul (or body-mind) dualism and monism. These are not the only possibilities, and, in themselves, represent major categories of views, each encompassing a variety of versions and nuances. But for the sake of this discussion of flourishing, we will highlight the major tenets of these two primary categories and explore their implications for Christian life and flourishing.

The questions we wish to tackle in this short article are, What differences in the understanding of spiritual flourishing would result from these two different views of human nature? and What difference might these views make for the life of Christians and Christian communities?

Body-Soul Dualism

In current evangelical Christian culture, body-soul dualism is presumed by most. It is the default position. This view holds that human beings are composed of two basic parts, one material, the body, and the other non-material, the soul. The soul connects us to the spiritual world and is the source of spiritual life. In some variants, the "self" (or mind) is substituted for soul, signaling the critical role of an inner part in constituting personal identity. Since the soul is located *inside* each individual person, it is out of sight and separated from other individuals. The life of the soul is only partially reflected in behavior and understood to remain largely disconnected from the health of the body and the quality of relationships with others.

Within the worldview of dualism, spiritual flourishing is a matter of the state of one's soul. While in some circumstances the results of flourishing may be indirectly evident to others, the important question is about something going on inside, hidden from view. Spiritual flourishing is an inward

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Three Fuller faculty members explore the relationship between body and soul in recent books: (left to right) Director of the Lee Edward Travis Research Institute Warren Brown, with Malcom Jeeves, *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion: Illusions, Delusions, and Realities about Human Nature*; Professor of Christian Philosophy Nancey Murphy, with Warren Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?*; and Professor of New Testament Interpretation Joel Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*.

journey deep into the center of the soul or self where one can independently and privately relate to the Spirit of God. Thus, spiritual flourishing is inner, individual, private, disembodied, mystical, and essentially disconnected from community.

The appropriate evidence of this sort of spiritual flourishing is a subjective (emotional) state. To flourish spiritually seems to require one to close one's eyes, shut one's self off from others, and sing with conviction, "It is well with my soul." While spiritual flourishing might be helped or hindered *somewhat* by one's social context (such as a worship service), this is neither necessary nor sufficient because spirituality resides in a different realm—the realm of the soul. Because the center of attention for this type of flourishing is inward and individual, it is easy for it to become disconnected from the physical. The measure of spiritual flourishing is not related to a person's physical, social, or economic context. In the words of the old spiritual, "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passin' through." Within this view of human nature, it is coherent to say, as many do these days, "I am spiritual, but not religious."

Even within dualism, traditional Christianity has held the important notion of the "fruits of the Spirit." These are behavioral and relational markers, or secondary manifestations, of a more primary state within the person. These fruits are not the spiritual thing itself, but what might (should) emerge from it in one's behavior. And even these fruits may come to be understood as somewhat Platonic abstractions, only partially realized in the events of one's behavior.

Monism, Holism, Physicalism

But what if we are simply bodies that dwell in a physical world created and inhabited by the Spirit of God? What if there is not a distinct hidden inner part that is the "real me"? What if I am my body, I am what I do, I am my history, and I am my human relationships? What then does spiritual flourishing look like?

Monism (or holism or physicalism) believes that humans are thoroughly one thing—a physical body. We are embodied persons, but not just any sort of body. We are bodies characterized by sufficient capacity and complexity to be (within varying limits) intelligent, genuinely relational, and self-governing moral agents, as well as persons capable of knowing and responding to God. A defense of how this might be the case is beyond the scope of this article, but we point to our colleague Nancey Murphy's recent book, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), and Murphy and Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

Given the long dominance of body-soul dualism in

Christian thought, why would one believe monism/physicalism to be true? While, again, adequate discussion of this point escapes the scope of this article, we nevertheless point to two important reasons. First, within modern psychology and neuroscience, dualism is increasingly an incoherent position. Mental, emotional, behavioral, and religious/spiritual life is increasingly found to be aspects of what our bodies do. The mind is clearly not even exclusively a product of the brain, but is rooted in the activities of the entire body as it interacts with the physical and social world. (Here we refer the reader to Jeeves and Brown, *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion*, Templeton Press, 2009). Second, many theologians and Biblical scholars since the middle of the last century (if not before) have moved toward the view that a monist (embodied) understanding of human nature is more compatible with biblical teaching and less contaminated by Platonic philosophical categories. (Here see Joel Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, Baker Academic, 2008).

If we are indeed physical beings, then what does this mean for spiritual flourishing? If we do not have an inner self or soul to cultivate, what does it mean to be spiritual? In the context of a holistic and physical understanding of humankind, spirituality becomes relational, involving outward relations with God and with our neighbor. "Love the Lord with all your heart . . . and love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37–39). "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly

with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Much of the literature on spirituality presumes that we must begin inside where the soul meets God. To love God is to be in an inner state of relationship marked by a subjective feeling of closeness to God. But if what is inside is complex supportive physiology, then the God whom we are to meet in prayer and meditation is not to be found *within* us but *outside* us and *between* us. This is not to deny the mystery that God who is spirit communicates with his material creation, but rather to suggest that we must look out (rather than in) to find where God is working and where his presence and activity can be most clearly discerned. Then, to flourish spiritually we must find (through prayer, meditation, reading, and Bible study within a discerning community) how we can relate to and become involved with the means and manners of God's redemptive work. The evidence of flourishing is not an inward feeling state, but participation with God in sustaining his creation, working for a just society, and caring for his people. Spiritual flourishing is not inward, individualistic, and subjective, but outward, communal, and objective—it is marked by a Kingdom life!

This brings us to the next part of the great commandment—love of others. If we are bodies (not soul-bodies), spiritual flourishing has to do with the nature of social and physical relationships. Spiritual flourishing is the thriving of the whole-person-in-context, including the thriving of the immediate community. Thus, attention is turned outward toward how others are doing within the context of their whole lives (physical, economic, mental, and relational), and how they are (or are not) enmeshed in a community reflective of the Kingdom of God.

This embodied spiritual flourishing can only occur in communities of persons, most particularly the church. Therefore, we must recognize our responsibility for one another, and we must be open to let others be responsible for us! However, because of our usual bent toward individuality, it is too easy for us to let the church become only a means of individual spiritual nourishment that is nice if you can make it, but not critical to spiritual life. When spirituality becomes disconnected from a community, the church, it ends up being a form of heroic quest in which each individual travels alone in his or her own inner spiritual world. This may help explain the drop in nationwide church attendance. But understood as embodied, spiritual flourishing would necessarily *have* to develop within the context of a spiritually flourishing community—that is, within a community characterized by deep and meaningful relationships with one another and with God.

Persons with disability provide an important case-in-

point. Persons who are disabled (physically, cognitively, and/or emotionally) by definition have some form and degree of difficulty flourishing on their own outside of a community that has an imagination for ways to help them thrive. However, if we believe that the primary concern of the church is the inner life of each individual Christian, it is easy to disregard the role of the church community in the flourishing of those who are disabled. We may smile at a person who is depressed or open the door for the person in a wheelchair, but more consistent, long-term, and deep involvement is too often not seen as having a claim on us as spiritual persons or as church communities.

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre turns the issue of disability back on each of us. He suggests that there is no such thing as discrete categories of the disabled and the non-disabled. As he says it, "There is a *scale of disability* on which we all find ourselves. Disability is a matter of more or less, both with respect to degree of disability and in respect to the time periods in which we are disabled."² It is not simply that this person or that person has some disabling condition and the rest of us do not; we are all disabled in varying ways and to different degrees in the past, now, and in the future. So an embodied sense of spiritual flourishing requires all of us to acknowledge our dependence and need for the scaffolding of our lives by communities of other persons in order to thrive and flourish.

The concept of embodied and relational spiritual flourishing, both of individuals and communities, contextualizes the biblical command to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8). That is, we begin to see the difference between seeing to the survival and well-being of our own inner self or soul, and participating in the loving work of the God who pervades the world we inhabit and the people with whom we share God's world.

Rather than singing "It is well with my soul!" to express our inner and individual state of being, perhaps we should be singing with Bill Withers:

*Lean on me when you're not strong.
I'll be your friend. I'll help you carry on.
For it won't be long 'til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on.*

ENDNOTES

1. This essay is based on a book in preparation by the authors tentatively entitled *Human Bodies—Church Bodies* to be published by Cambridge University Press.
2. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 73.



A Poetic Theology: What Can Beauty Do for Us?

MOST PEOPLE WANT more from their lives than they have. In their encounter with each other, with various cultural goods, and potentially with God, people are always trying to move beyond simply making a life for themselves to making a good (or beautiful) life. They want to rise above a merely functional way of living, in order to “make something lovely” of their homes or their families—or at least that is their hope. The impulse to move beyond the immediate situation in which we find ourselves is built into what it means to be human. My reason for saying this is theological: This movement that is embodied in our desires and fears, in our feeling for what is around us, reflects God’s purposes for us, and finally, is meant to move

SYNOPSIS

Dyrness investigates what he calls “the poetic sphere” of human life and its intrinsic value to human flourishing. The response to beauty and the hope of something more to life than merely functioning reflect God’s purposes for us and are meant to drive humans toward the love and worship of the One in whose image we were made. Art, says Dyrness, can be a step in the journey that leads to God.

us to love and worship of God. By virtue of being created in God’s image, I would argue, human beings are responsive agents. Emil Brunner in fact describes the “image of God” in which Genesis says humans are created in terms of “responsibility” or, literally, their respond-ability.¹ It is our very ability to feel emotions that moves us toward or away from people and situations—part of an intricate set of dispositions that make up the fundamental structure of our spiritual lives.

But these responses are appropriate, and effective, because they answer to the way the world around us is constituted. We are drawn toward people and situations for a wide variety of reasons, of course, but we are especially attracted to those things which are textured in attractive, figured ways. Human life is lived, so to speak, in a charged field of moral and aesthetic values to which we respond, and, finally, in terms of which we forge an identity.

But how does one break out of the merely practical level

of life toward what I am calling the poetic sphere? Here M. M. Bakhtin can be of help. He describes the way the novel has developed in the modern period as that genre of literature radically charged with temporality.² Within this zone of the radical present the discourse of the novel has emerged. In the storied context of the novel the individual is faced with inconclusive events and radical contingency, and the reader wonders what the protagonist will make of all these disparate events and situations. He is called, Bakhtin says, to acquire “the ideological and linguistic initiative necessary to change the nature of his own image” (38). But the problem is that the poetics of the situation are locked away, subordinated to what Bakhtin calls the “bounded image” (50).

People, in other words, become stuck in routines and roles which are intrinsically unsatisfying, but which they seem powerless to change. The career waiter had always hoped to break into acting or return to school, but never manages to do so. How does such a person break through to the poetic? Bakhtin argues that there are two factors which have been decisive in the development of the novel and which are essential to creating the dialogical situation in which this change in image becomes possible. These are laughter and *polyglossia*. The former allowed people to parody every genre, which in turn “freed consciousness from the power of the direct word” (60). Laughter, in other words, becomes a weapon against the world as taken-for-granted. In the latter, *polyglossia*, struggles between and within languages, high and low, foreign and domestic, were able to “mutually illuminate one another” (76). Bakhtin believes this dynamic situation of parody and the clash of voices

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IN SEARCH OF “IMAGO DEI”



Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1536

The *imago Dei*, or “image of God,” is a theological doctrine asserting that human beings are created in God’s image and have inherent value—first, as his own self-expression, and second, as the object of his love. The biblical basis for this is Genesis 1:26–27: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (NRSV).

de-centers everyday life and makes change possible. He concludes: “The dialogic orientation of word among other words (of all kinds and degrees of otherness) creates new and significant artistic potential in discourse . . . which has found its fullest and deepest expression in the novel” (275).

Notice that it is in the exchange between the various languages, an openness to which was made possible by laughter, where change takes place. But note further that it is not simply any alternate voice, but voices, as Bakhtin puts it, which have been canonized, that are shaped into artistic images, that truly make change possible (417–22). These images, in the form of artistic classics, grow and develop over time and continue to do their work on the imaginations of subsequent generations. Such classics embody parody and dialogic encounters that enable and stimulate a change in images.

This suggests that novels, and other embodied images, can provide alternative narratives, which can open up the experience of the reader in a way that make change possible. In the very clash, or dialogue, of languages one can “see” some new way of making a life. But does seeing a new way to live imply that a new life is really possible? It turns out that this is precisely the claim that the Scriptures make about all of life’s little stories—change is possible, but not guaranteed. Seeing oneself in terms of the alternative voices of Scripture, as loved by God, suggests one might actually become something different, perhaps something better and more attractive. Scripture includes the dialogue of voices that add to its power and influence. Moreover it is clear that part of the attraction of this narrative is its figural and narrative form—its stories and images. Augustine recognized the power of these intertextual dimensions of Scripture when he noted:

{It} is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery, and much more rewarding to discover meanings that are won only with difficulty. . . . It is a beneficial thing that the Holy Spirit organized holy scripture so as to satisfy hunger by means of its plainer passages and remove hunger by means of obscurer ones.³

All of this contributes to the promise of Scripture that transformation of the reader is what God intends, and works to accomplish. But how does this relate to the goods that cultural wisdom has handed down, specifically the classics of literature and art, to which Bakhtin is referring? Here I will make two interrelated claims. First, because of the way the world is made and God’s continued presence in that world, and because human agents are made in the image of God, cultural products—when they are good and true—can move people toward God. They can, as it were,

echo and even facilitate the movement of the soul toward God that is described in the Christian narrative. But second, because of the broken nature of that creation and that agency, a simple encounter with an alternate voice, or even the imaged dialogue of voices, cannot result in any genuine transformation. Even the freedom from a life-taken-for-granted that laughter allows and the attraction of alternate stories do not, in themselves, make people better. But because God is at work in this process, the potential is there.

But how do we understand this presence of God? In conclusion let me suggest two elements critical to the development of a theological aesthetic. First, even though it is true, as Scriptures claim, that God’s beauty shines through the created order, and that Christ upholds the order, we do not have direct access to God through this beauty. Powerful works of art, just as other objects of desire, can become a step in the journey that leads to God, but they do not constitute a witness that is unambiguous. The reason for this is Paul’s assertion that though the very heavens declare the glory of God, humans suppress and distort the truth we feel, and do not honor the one to which this witnesses (Rom 1:18, 21). Later, in Romans 7, Paul, from his own experience, testifies that when he tried consistently to live a beautiful life, he found that



“So when advocating something to be acted on the Christian orator should not only teach his listeners so as to impart instruction, and delight them so as to hold their attention, but also move them so as to conquer their minds.”
—from *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine

of Hippo, 354–430, philosopher and theologian, considered one of the most important figures in Western Christianity.

he was unable to do so. This does not make the perception, even the attraction of beauty (and the figural shape of poetry) less important, but it does mean that its role must be incorporated into a larger narrative of journey and conversion.

The problem is not only the nature of the brokenness of

ENDNOTES

1. See Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947).
2. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), 7–11, and pages given in the text.
3. Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford:

our vision and the world, but also the historical and progressive nature of faith. It is always possible to relate to the claims of objective beauty “despairingly” as Kierkegaard put it. That is, we forget that the *self* is a call and a process of becoming, by faith in God’s grace and leading. We can misuse the call of beauty. Contemporary deviations in the pursuit of aesthetics seem to specialize in celebrating an essentialized self in the aesthetic moment, forgetting that the self is formed over time by a process that necessarily involves faith in some form or other. The Christian life of faith is not simply an event, or an illumination,⁴ it is a growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:14–15), through the historical exigencies that a person necessarily encounters. It is a breaking through to a larger shared knowledge about things lived out and not simply observed. Essential to this process, however, are moments of delight and beauty that, as Bonaventure put it, are movements of the soul toward God. ■

Reprinted from William Dyrness, *Poetic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010)*, reprinted by permission from the publisher, all rights reserved.

Oxford University Press, 1997), 33.

4. In this way Nebel’s description of the Protestant tendency to understand aesthetics as an event rather than a substance is misleading, and therefore Balthasar’s dismissal of it premature. See *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Erasmio Leiva-Merikakis, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 64–70. Aesthetics must be understood as incorporated into a larger process of becoming like Christ.

WOLTERSTORFF *continued from page 10*

loving one another is not just obedience to a command God has given us. Our love for each other is a manifestation of God’s love for us.

I think we can now begin to spy why God as love is light. To love my brothers and sisters is to seek their good, their flourishing. God’s love for us radiates out into our seeking the flourishing of each other. Is that not analogous to what is most fundamental about light in our lives? Yes, light illuminates our path. But even more fundamental, light radiates out from the sun to nourish us, to provide the energy without which there could be no life. How better to describe God as love—love radiating out from God onto and into us and from us to the neighbor—than to say that God is light?

You don’t need me to tell you that this has been the

chapel talk of a professor, not a preacher! I’ve been asking in professorial fashion what John was saying and why he might have said it. But I do not want these hermeneutical reflections *about* what John said to be the last word. These reflections were aimed not at replacing what John said, nor at standing in between you and what John said, but at casting light on what he said. John’s own gentle injunction must be the last word: Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and those who love are born of God and know God. Those who do not love do not know God; for God is love.

And God is light. God’s love is the light that shines onto and into us and through us to the neighbor, sustaining us and making us flourish as does the sun. ■

FULLER NEWS & NOTES

Highlights from recent lectures by Fuller faculty and guests. Expanded coverage is available online at www.fuller.edu/tnn.

EXCERPT: D. SCOTT CORMODE ON A LEADER’S RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP PEOPLE GROW



D. Scott Cormode, PhD, Hugh De Pree Professor of Leadership Development, founded the Academy of Religious Leadership, created the Journal of Religious Leadership, and authored *Making Spiritual Sense: Theological Interpretation as Christian Leadership*. An excerpt from his professorial lecture follows:

The Next Faithful Step

Most people want the wrong things from a leader. I remember sitting with a committee that was interviewing candidates to be the president of their Christian nonprofit. They were looking for two things in a candidate. They wanted vision (meaning someone who could say, “This is where we are going”) and they wanted a plan (meaning they also wanted the person to say, “And here’s how we are going to get there”). In short, they wanted a leader who could tell them the next seven steps that would help them reach their goal.

And I understand why we long for such leaders. But there is a problem with that kind of leadership. It won’t work—or at least it won’t get us the things that matter most. This lay-out-the-steps leadership model works great if you are doing something like putting together a bicycle on Christmas Eve. There you want step-by-step instructions tailored for assembling Model Number 1370A—with optional training wheels and tassels for the handlebars. It works because it is a predictable system (you know in advance exactly which parts are there and how they fit together) designed for a very limited situation (Model 1370A).

So let’s expand our example. My daughter likes to grow

herbs—such as sage, lemon balm, and mint. She buys them in little plastic cups and plants them in clay pots on our patio. Once she has planted and watered them that first day, what’s the next step? Here’s where we see the flaw in the lay-out-the-steps leadership model. The next step depends on what happens. If it is particularly hot outside, my daughter needs to water her herbs a lot. If it is rainy, she has to move them under the awning so they don’t drown. And so on. Her goal is not just to plant the herbs. Her goal is to help them grow. So she can’t tell me what the next step is because the next step depends on what happens after the previous step.

Her goal is to help them grow. Our goal as Christian leaders is not to put together a ministry like it is a pre-packaged bicycle. Our goal is to help God’s people grow. And, if our goal is to help people grow, then we cannot follow the lay-out-the-steps model of leadership. What, then, can a Christian leader do?

I believe that a Christian leader’s responsibility is to help God’s people take the next faithful step. And then, once a person or community has taken the next faithful step, then the leader can help them take the next step after that.

Why is it so important to take one faithful step at a time? Because we can’t predict in advance what steps will be necessary. Think, for example, of the congregation that wanted to do the relatively straightforward project of building a fellowship hall on the church property. They expected to form a committee, draw up plans, collect the funds, hire a contractor, and build the hall. But at each step along the way, they discovered things about themselves that made the next faithful step anything but straightforward. Even forming the initial committee proved a challenge. It brought up latent controversies between the church staff and the church board about formal control—and buried resentments between wealthy nominal families and poor

active members about informal control. Indeed, the pastor was wise enough to see the process for what it was. The next faithful step for the congregation, she wisely realized, was not forming a committee. The next faithful step was dealing with the long-buried resentments over control that needed to be addressed before the congregation was ready to form a committee. If the pastor had stuck to the plan, she never would have helped the congregation take the next faithful step.

Now don't get me wrong. I do believe that the leader of that congregation had to have a general outline of how the process would go. But she had to hold the process loosely enough to be able to adjust to the needs of each step.

Otherwise, her congregation could have built the hall, but they would not have grown in faithfulness.

Focusing on the next faithful step is crucial because taking that next step is often painful. And painful steps take time. In fact, it is often tempting to gloss over the painful part (the growing part) in the name of progress. But that really only helps us if our goals have nothing to do with helping people grow.

We often look for the wrong things in our leaders. We look for people who will tell us where to go and what to do. But what we need are leaders who can help us grow. In short, we need leaders who will help us take the next faithful step.

EXCERPT: ALEXIS D. ABERNETHY ON WORSHIP THAT CHANGES LIVES



Alexis D. Abernethy, PhD, a professor in the School of Psychology, is widely published. Her primary research interest is the intersection between spirituality and health, and her clinical specialties include adult individual and group psychotherapy. An excerpt from her professorial lecture follows:

Worship, Models, and Relationships: Integrating the Work of René Girard

Christian worship provides models for divine and human relationships. This lecture will address the role of Christian worship in influencing relationships by drawing on a distinction that René Girard articulates in his mimetic theory: sacrificial and nonsacrificial. The focus will be on the response to relational offense. When a person has been offended and is justified in blaming the person who offended him/her, he/she has an opportunity to follow models that encourage scapegoating and sacrifice (pursuing justified blame) or to imitate the desire of a God who demands mercy and not sacrifice (transcending blame). Worship may provide individuals with models of an orientation toward transcending blame in response to relational offense, but penal substitutionary and other theories of atonement may obscure for Christians the reality of these nonsacrificial and nonpunitive alternatives.

a. Now, to highlight the results from our pilot study that informed the focus for today's talk. Some of these results are presented more fully in my book, *Worship that Changes Lives*. Our pilot study included 75 African American,

Caucasian, Latino, or Korean church members from Pentecostal or Presbyterian churches. Our primary question was whether certain types of worship experiences were associated with behavioral and health-related outcomes. We asked participants to share a transformational worship experience. Specifically, our interview question was "Apart from a conversion experience, reflect on a worship experience in a church service that changed you and made a difference in your life."

b. First, participant responses suggested that worship played a transformational role in people's lives based on self-report (Abernethy, 2008), noting that the sermon or message had the most prominent role as a trigger in these experiences.

c. Second, many participants described a changed perspective on their relationships including the following categories: family and parenting, relationships with other people, and relationships in the life of the church (Dueck, 2008). In general, individuals reported they were more accepting of others, more collaborative, and more gracious toward others. Worship provided cognitive insight that was associated with affective, relational, and behavioral change.

d. These findings refocused our attention toward the relational domain to consider what theoretical lenses might more comprehensively capture our understanding of worship and its influence on relationships.

e. René Girard has developed mimetic theory to explain a wide range of interpersonal and cultural phenomena, including understanding how human violence arises and the nature and origins of religious rituals. His mimetic theory consists of three components: (1) mimetic desire,

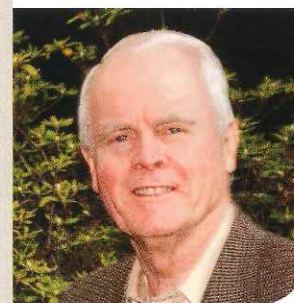
(2) the scapegoating mechanism, and (3) the reversal of the scapegoating mechanism. This theoretical perspective deepened our ability to understand how worship influences relationships and relational conflict in particular.

- i. First, I want to consider how worship may influence the early phases of this scapegoating process. In response to a relational offense where blame would be justified, what models might move worshippers away from a sacrificial orientation which includes the process of pursuing a position of justified blame towards a non-sacrificial perspective which includes a position of transcending blame [mercy not sacrifice]?
- ii. I would argue that Green & Baker (2000) and Girard provide an important perspective for examining models of worship. It is a perspective that moves away from a focus on justified anger, penalty for disobedience, and violence, and moves toward transformation, healthier individuals, relationships, and communities. Although Girard is not attempting to develop a theory of atonement, his analysis provides a vital lens and potential scaffolding for articulating one approach to moving away from this more traditional perspective

(Daniels & Michelson, 2006).

- iii. Transcending blame narratives in worship would include a focus that underscores not only Jesus' words but other biblical narratives that encourage nonviolence, less blame, denigration, and scapegoating of others. In contrast, justified blame narratives would underscore justified anger of those who were wronged that might be followed by divine punishment and even vengeance. In summary, a Girardian lens in examining worship practices may explain more fully the inevitable presence of conflict, provide a more precise articulation for understanding ways in which religion may contain conflict and violence, and also illuminate the extent to which religions may or may not provide ideal models for this containment and movement away from justified blame toward transcending blame.
- iv. If we use a Girardian lens through which to examine the effects of worship, we may more fully explain the inevitable presence of conflict, more precisely articulate an understanding of the ways in which religion may contain conflict and violence, and illuminate the extent to which worship may result in transformation.

EXCERPT: GORDON MACDONALD ON THE INSIDE OF OUR PRIVATE WORLD



Noted author Gordon MacDonald was the lead speaker for the inaugural Brehm lecture. In the following excerpt, MacDonald recounts that in the early years of his ministry he leaned too heavily on his own gifts for ministry without a deep spiritual life. This led to burnout—and a dramatic wake-up call.

Life Issues Conversation: Inside Our Private World

I've been a pastor, or involved in pastoral ministry, for almost forty-nine years. Actually, one could say it goes further back than that because the day I was born and brought home from the hospital, my mother and my grandmother joined hands over my cradle and committed me to God. As family legend goes, my grandmother said to my mother: "Now, Esther, you have your preacher. Raise him to be one." And she did.

In my study, I have this big picture of myself at age four, on my birthday: little short kid, white shirt, short blue pants, and a Bible bigger than I am, and I am preaching to the family. The look of pleasure on my mother's face is

irresistible.

So I'm not sure that I even had a chance from those earliest days to do anything but what I've done over the years. And there have been no regrets. I have loved my job, and the five congregations that I've pastored over those many years have all been very pleasing congregations and experiences for me. The only serious problems that I had, and I had them, were ones I created for myself. . . .

These years are now spent, God be praised, free of the institutional responsibilities of leading a church and spending most of my time with the call that I believe God has given to me in my upper years. And that's to be something of a spiritual father to younger men and women who are moving into leadership and trying to find out from old guys like me what the opportunities and lessons of ministry are.

I should say that I've been married for forty-nine years, father of two married children, grandfather of five children, who range from eighteen to thirteen. . . . Gail and I have spent this life together. We met sharing a common vision of wanting to serve the Lord, and that's been a very elegant experience for the two of us over the years. I say without any embarrassment that we're more in love today than ever, and that's a very real possibility when you track as closely as the two of us have for so long.

When I was thirty-one years of age, which means that I had been doing ministry for five or six years, I had reached a moment—in fact, I can tell you the month: it was December of 1968—I had been in a period of ministry that had been non-stop seven days a week. Up before the sun, to bed after midnight. Lots of anxiety, lots of stress, too many speaking engagements, some tensions in our leadership that I was trying to reconcile, heavy-duty counseling with one person after another that had difficult problems. I remember having two funerals close to each other of homeless people where I was overwhelmed by the thought of meaningless deaths and lives. I must have been naïve, because it just overwhelmed me to look at these men in the caskets and realize how empty their lives had been.

All of this stuff was just swirling in me when on a Saturday morning I came down to breakfast, and Gail was there with the two children. We all sat down and after prayer she said very calmly—she was not trying to be accusing, she was not trying to make me feel guilty, but she was observing the truth—she said, “you sure haven’t spent much time with your children lately.” And my response to that comment was not to protest or to be defensive, because I knew she was right; my response was to suddenly burst into tears. Tears which grew and grew explosively into retching and sobbing. Tears that went on for four hours. I could not stop. I could not turn off the faucet of emotion that seemed to be flowing from some deep source in me. . . . It was so dramatic to me, so unprecedented, that it’s just

like it happened a few days ago. I’ve never forgotten that moment. It was a defining moment in my life.

Gail was very wise. She got our two kids off to a neighbor’s house, and for the most part of those four hours, she just held me in her arms and allowed me this cathartic experience. Wisely, she did not preach at me, she didn’t quote Bible verses, she didn’t say “men don’t do this!” She didn’t have easy answers to what was going on—I’m not sure *she* understood it. She just was there for me and shared the agony of those hours.

When the time came that there were no more tears, I sat quietly for several more hours and the question that drove itself deep into me was “what in the world has happened this morning? What does this mean? What’s the message in it?” And I guess what had happened in the emotion, and the end of it all, was that it left me in one of those unique moments that people ought to have more of: it left me in a moment of being able to listen to God. In the quiet of the hours, the experience that was so shocking to me allowed my heart to just open to what heaven might say.

I’m not one who goes around claiming that God speaks to me in English all the time and directs me—I’ve heard people like that; I’m not one of them, really. Although I believe God speaks into my life all the time, in other ways. But that day it seemed like he was speaking English. And the word that came to me that afternoon, which was emblazoned on my soul, was this, and this is a direct quote: “Now you know what it’s like to live out of an empty soul.”

EXCERPT: JOHN FANTUZZO AND CHARLES HOWARD ON GOD USING THE POOR TO HELP THE POOR



The Integration Symposium at the School of Psychology in 2010 was entitled “Psychology Of, With, and For the Poor.” Following is an excerpt from a joint chapel address given by Dr. John Fantuzzo and Rev. Charles Howard. Other guest lecturers included Saul and Pilar Cruz-Ramos.

Good News to the Poor: A Christian Response through Relationship, Vocation, and Disciplined Gifts

HOWARD: Our scripture this morning is about Jesus feeding the 5,000 (John 6:1–12) and this is the only miracle, outside of the resurrection, that is recorded in all four Gospels. He must have known that he was not enough. As he stood

there, amidst the commotion, amidst the debate about how best to feed this large crowd, I wonder if this little boy’s bold naivete made the disciple Andrew chuckle a little with barely hidden cynicism, or did a tear come to Andrew’s eye, moved by the boy’s simple act of kindness? You almost wish the evangelist would tell us more about this nameless child in the Gospels. This poor—perhaps literally poor—child worked up the courage to respond to something he heard the Nazarene say earlier. Standing there, a few feet shorter than these disciples who do have names, he must have asked himself, “who am I to try to make a difference? Why am I even here?” I imagine he then looked down in his little bag, saw five loaves and two fish, and had a thought: “What do I have to offer?”

FANTUZZO: I was standing there, amidst the commotion and debate, as I tried to address this large crowd. Here the crowd was not 5,000—it was more like 200. And it was not on the shore of Galilee, the closest shore was the

Delaware River on the edge of Philadelphia. No, this was not John—one of the disciples serving with Jesus. It was me, a professor, trying to bring one of my ideas of headstart, unsuccessfully, to 200 upset parents in West Philadelphia.

H: You think an audience of 5,000 hungry men is a tough crowd? Try 200 angry parents from West Philadelphia. This is the city that threw snowballs at Santa at an Eagles football game. This is the city that produced the heavyweight champion, the greatest boxer of all time: Rocky Balboa. This is the city still shoveling out of four feet of snow, at present. While there’s a somewhat comical aspect to this traditional Philadelphia grit, there is a terribly tragic aspect of life in Philadelphia that is no laughing matter at all. Philadelphia is the poorest of the ten largest cities in the U.S. with 24.5% of households living in poverty. This is nearly twice the national average. Philadelphia is struggling with high rates of unemployment and crime. On any given night there are five thousand homeless women and men living on the streets and in the shelters of our city. Only one out of every two public-school students graduates from high school. Nearly 70% of the public elementary school population lives in households that are below the poverty line. It is to this particular population—young, poor urban children—that my father-in-law, John Fantuzzo, has found himself called to serve.

F: The group of mothers and fathers was suspicious and untrusting of the research program that the professor from the university was about to talk about. They were upset by rumors that the University of Pennsylvania, which just appointed me a professor, was going to be conducting research experiments on black children. And as one parent put it:

H: “They wanna use my kids as guinea pigs!”

F: As I tried to speak, everyone was shouting out questions and comments. In this highly charged situation, I did not have a chance to even utter a single word, then all of a sudden, like Jesus speaking the calm to the storm—except with a Philly accent—a young mom holding a little baby stood up and said:

H: “Will ya’ll SHUT UP! Let this man speak!” Then, turning to John with the most determined look, she said, “I just have three questions for you: Who are you? Why are you here? and What do you have to offer us?”

F: In that special moment, I knew that I was not enough. Phew—I can still feel it now! In the face of those penetrating questions, I was confronted with my own stark poverty. God broke my heart. He stripped me of my Fuller PhD, my appointment at an ivy league institution, my own ego—all pretense was gone. I looked into her determined eyes and I

was speechless. I must confess that on so many levels I do not belong here. Just thirty years ago I was walking around this campus going from class to chapel, trying to discern what God had for me, what did God want me to do? I certainly did not see myself coming back to speak to Fuller Seminary students and scholars in theology, anthropology, and psychology at an integration symposium! Quite frankly I was baffled most of the time by the psychology and theology integration part while I was a student at Fuller. I certainly did not see myself lecturing and preaching about urban poverty, urban education, and the needs and possibilities of poor African American and Latino children at an integration symposium! I am not supposed to be here! No, the African American mayor of Philadelphia, or the school district’s Latino Chief of Staff, or Cardinal Rigali of the Archdiocese, or the Chairman of the Black Ministers Association. One of those big names is supposed to be here, not me. Not the former Fuller student. Not the guy who grew up in a poor city neighborhood in New York. Not the guy who is the first in his family to graduate from high school. Not me.

H: In some ways, that little boy was not supposed to be in that story of the feeding of the multitude either. When Jesus suggests that the disciples feed them, it’s supposed to be one of these great Christians who would step up and believe. It was supposed to be Peter, the rock! It was supposed to be John, beloved disciple. They were supposed to be the ones to step up and bring what they had to Jesus. This little boy was not supposed to be in the story. What amazing grace! That God uses poor little ones, like that little boy, like us! This is one of the most powerful things in this moment in the Gospels—that God used one from among the poor to help bless the poor. This little boy was one of those thousands gathered there. He was one of the poor blessing the poor! Jesus connected with the gifts that this little poor nameless one offered and then blessed multitudes with them.

F: This is the first lesson we would like to offer: the “who are you” question. While asking about one’s identity, it’s more important to be asking “who are you *with*?” Jesus’s connection to the poor embodied in this poor little boy is a key factor in the story. Jesus in his power could have fed the hungry there on his own, he could have decided to eliminate starvation forever, but instead he choose to use the gifts that were present in those he came to serve, and to call on those who were to follow him in future acts of obedience and service on behalf of the hungry. Too often caregivers come with the intent of saving and fixing rather than being “with” in relationship those who they are called to serve. To the question “who are you,” our response should not be a listing of achievements or job titles, it should be a statement of our commitment to be “with.” To “who are you” we should reply, “I am the one who stands with you.”

FACES OF FULLER

Bert Jacklitch

In 2002, the American luge team was preparing for the Winter Olympics when a terrible crash left an athlete hospitalized in Switzerland, far from family in Wyoming. Their pastor, a Fuller grad, called Bert Jacklitch to see if she knew any Fuller alumni/ae in Zurich who might help. Her reply began, as it often does, "It so happens. . . ."

Soon, a distraught father was met in Zurich by Jan and Hans Geiser-Schafer, who helped him get to his son. When it comes to making connections—finding a Fuller pastor, a Fuller psychologist, or an international colleague—38,000 alumni/ae worldwide can stay in touch through her office. After thirty years of service to Fuller—a dozen of them in the alumni/ae and church relations office—*Bert* is the reason "it so happens."

Bert Jacklitch is the director of the Alumni/ae and Church Relations office at Fuller. To keep connected with this community, contact her at 626-584-5506 or bert@fuller.edu

