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INTERSECTIONS

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NUMBER 4

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Fallen Angel

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INTERSECTIONS

NUMBER 4, WINTER 1998

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Purpose Statement

This publication is by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-eight colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is published by the Division for Higher Education and Schools of the ELCA. The publication presently has its home at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio which has generously offered leadership, physical and financial support as an institutional sponsor for the inauguration of the publication.

What is the purpose of such a publication?

The ELCA has frequently sponsored conferences for faculty and administrators which have addressed the church - college/university partnership. Recently the ELCA has sponsored an annual Vocation of the Lutheran College conference. The primary purpose of INTERSECTIONS is to enhance and continue such dialogue. It will do so by:

- * Lifting up the vocation of Lutheran colleges and universities
- * Encouraging thoughtful dialogue about the partnership of colleges and universities with the church
- * Offering a forum for concerns and interests of faculty at the intersection of faith, learning and teaching
- * Raising for debate issues about institutional missions, goals, objectives and learning priorities
- * Encouraging critical and productive discussion on our campuses of issues focal to the life of the church
- * Serving as a bulletin board for communications among institutions and faculties
- * Publishing papers presented at conferences sponsored by the ELCA and its institutions
- * Raising the level of awareness among faculty about the Lutheran heritage and connectedness of their institutions, realizing a sense of being part of a larger family with common interests and concerns.

From the Editor

Jim Unglaube, who has served the ELCA's Division for Higher Education and Schools (and before that in the same office of the ALC) has made a career move. Beginning the first of January he has begun his duties at Carthage College, his alma mater. Jim has been the coordinator of the three previous Vocation of a Lutheran College Conferences, and has served as the Publisher of INTERSECTIONS. Both of these things he has worked diligently at, planning, enabling, and finding funding for them as they have developed. In both projects he has obviously been concerned to initiate and continue a significant dialogue about the meaning and possibilities of Lutheran higher education in the ELCA. He has done all this in his own quiet, modest, and efficient way. We all, whether we are directly aware of our connection to him or not, owe him a debt of gratitude. Let me personally say that it has been a pleasure to work with him and learn from him. Thank you Jim! Our best wishes to you on your new endeavors.

In previous issues of INTERSECTIONS I have used my editorial space to recommend some reading to you. I'm doing the same again. The book is *Keeping Faith: Embracing the Tensions in Christian Higher Education*, edited by Ronald A. Wells and published by Eerdmans. I recommend this book not only because of the interesting essays it contains but because of the kind of model it represents. It is a series of essays written and collected on the occasion of the installation of Gaylen Byker as the new president of Calvin College. What a great thing for a college to do, to collect the thoughts of significant people who have connection with the institution to reflect about the meaning of its mission and education there. We should do something like this in our ELCA institutions.

This issue of INTERSECTIONS includes several provocative pieces. Richard Hughes has revised and expanded the text of his address to last summer's Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference for inclusion here. We include some selections from a serious, yet ironic treatment of theological topics in dictionary form written by Carl Skrade and Spencer Porter. Gregory Clark has written a challenging essay about themes of peace and violence embedded in the rhetoric that shapes education. His essay is included here with a question-raising response by Karla Bohmbach.

This issue of INTERSECTIONS also initiates some new features which we hope will continue: **What I Have Learned** - an essay by one of our senior or emeritus faculty reflecting on their long experience as scholars and teachers in our institutions, initiated by Richard Ylvisaker; **Reviews**, - where recent books, the arts, films, and other media presentations can be reviewed by our readers, initiated with a review by Karla Bohmbach; **Bulletin Board** - where news of programs that may be of interest to faculty/administration at all our institutions may be listed. Please feel free to submit material or suggestions for all three of these features as well as response to what you read here.

Tom Christenson
January 1998
Capital University

THE VOCATION OF A LUTHERAN COLLEGE: SOME TRANSITIONAL THOUGHTS

I come to you with some final reflections on 30 years in Lutheran higher education. I do this even as I begin a new chapter in my own journey at Carthage College, my own *Alma Mater*. Leaving the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Division for Higher Education and Schools has not been easy. The Vocation of a Lutheran College project is a good example of what made that a difficult decision. We have been called as colleges and universities of the church to be places where mind, body and spirit are nurtured; to be places of both high quality and of excellence in all that we do. We have been called to be places which help students come to an understanding of their own vocation and then to take ownership of it. The results of our efforts are best told through the stories of our students, where and how they live out their own vocation as global citizens in service to the church and to the larger society. You all know those stories and we all need to keep telling them.

I look back now on my own good fortune. I began to explore my own vocation as a student at Carthage College. I began to live it out as a faculty member in chemistry at Lenoir-Rhyne College. I thought I would spend my life there doing that. I didn't. I took a turn into academic administration, also at Lenoir-Rhyne. And then, an opportunity came along to be a part of nurturing the church's mission in higher education, an opportunity which lasted twenty years. I made an apprehensive entry into this role, grew through the support and encouragement of countless people, and, now as I look back, had an almost unbelievable experience. I will not forget the importance of my colleague, Richard Solberg, in the early days of that work. My life became intertwined with the lives of 29 colleges and universities and of thousands of people.

I had the good fortune of watching these institutions thrive and grow in strength and stature. I watched as we made our way through the period of population decline of traditional college-age students. We came through that period, by and large, remarkable well. We grew slowly but steadily in enrollment through that period. We were fortunate to enter the new period of financial challenge in our lives, in the midst of which we now live, in rather good shape. Our endowments, while still not large enough, have grown from \$70 million to \$1 billion in 25 years. Our students benefit from \$500 million a year in financial aid. They also benefit from faculties as strong as they have ever been. It has not all been easy. I was directly involved in the decisions leading to the closing of Upsala College in 1995. That was a sad day. While the closing was, perhaps, inevitable, Upsala was serving a very diverse student body. It was living out an important vocation while struggling for its life. I along with my colleague Naomi Linnell, had the wonderful opportunity to live out the Higher Education and Namibia program. You on the campuses made the dream Naomi and I had come true. As a group we played, in fact we continue to play an important role in the development of the new nation of Namibia, now almost eight years old. This program too was a measure of our vocation as institutions in the Lutheran tradition.

And then, I was gifted to travel all over the world. I still pinch myself to be sure it's true the places I've been on behalf of our work together. I never expected this to be a part of my work. Now my challenge is to touch the two remaining continents I have not visited; Australia and Antarctica. The latter, at least, will be hard to justify on behalf of Lutheran higher education or Carthage College. Perhaps an alumni tour. Perhaps the annual Vocation of a Lutheran College conference. At least air conditioning would not be a problem.

I look back as well on our Vocation of a Lutheran College project. It has thrived and it has meant a great deal to me personally. I continue to thank Paul Dovre, President of Concordia College, for coming to us with the idea. It has benefited now from more than \$200,000 in grant support. It must continue. It was put in place to help all of us come to a better understanding of what it means to be an institution of higher education in the Lutheran tradition. We live in a time of challenges to that tradition, from within the church and from the larger society. We hope that this project can help maintain and develop the strength of the partnership between church and college in the Lutheran tradition. I hope I can get to the conferences in the future.

The colleges and universities of the Lutheran church are occasionally referred to as jewels. I agree with that characterization but I have another. I like to think of them as beautiful flowers, let's say roses. All of the flowers on a bush are the same color; the Lutheran tradition in higher education. At the same time each blossom is a little different from the next; the colleges and universities while all being a part of that tradition have their own histories and cultures. They live out their vocation in their own way. And, the rose bush will only thrive if it is cared for by the gardener. The same with the partnership between church and college. The partnership will only survive and thrive if it is nurtured. Let us never forget to water the flower, to trim them when they need it, to treasure their fragrance, and to share all that they are with each other.

Thanks for the ride!

James M. Unglaube
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OUR PLACE IN CHURCH-RELATED HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Richard T. Hughes

What special niche do Lutheran colleges and universities occupy in the world of church-related higher education in the United States? I want to address this question with reference to the primary task of higher education, namely, our obligation to enhance the life of the mind. When we ask, then, about the special niche Lutheran colleges and universities occupy in the world of church-related higher education, we are really asking, "What unique theological resources do Lutherans bring to the task of higher education, and how can those resources sustain the life of the mind?"

Before we begin, we must be clear on what we mean by the phrase, "the life of the mind." Surely, the life of the mind has little to do with rote memorization or the manipulation of data. Instead, it has everything to do with three dimensions of human thought. First, the life of the mind commits us to a rigorous and disciplined *search for truth*. Second, in the context of that search, the life of the mind entails *genuine conversation* as we seriously engage a variety of perspectives and worldviews in our radically pluralistic world. And third, the life of the mind involves *critical thinking* as we seek to discriminate between those worldviews and perspectives. When we ask, therefore, how the Lutheran heritage can sustain the life of the mind, we are asking how the Lutheran heritage can sustain the twin tasks of conversation and critical analysis in the context of the search for truth.

My Introduction to the Lutheran Faith

Before getting into the substance of my remarks, I want to make a few autobiographical observations. In the first place, I am not Lutheran in a formal sense, but I am profoundly Lutheran in a spiritual sense.

I grew up in a religious heritage that, at least in the days of my youth, was fraught with legalism and biblicism. As a result, I had little or no sense of biblical themes like "justification by grace through faith" until I was perhaps 20 years old. A single incident will illustrate this point.

Richard T. Hughes is Distinguished Professor of Religion at Pepperdine Univ., and co-editor (along with William B. Adrian) of *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in The Twentieth Century*.

When I was in the fifth grade, growing up in San Angelo, Texas, I always walked to school and had to cross a very busy street before I reached my final destination. I vividly recall reminding myself on many occasions that if per chance I were struck by a car and killed on the way to school, I must remember to ask God for forgiveness for all the sins I had committed since my most recent prayers. If I managed to get that prayer in before I expired, I had a chance at going to heaven. If not, I would be doomed to eternal damnation. You might think this a morbid thought for a ten-year old kid, but that's the way it was in my world in those years.

I don't recall hearing the gospel of God's grace until I was a sophomore in a church-related college. In a course on the book of Romans, the professor came to Romans 8:1: "For there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." He explained to us that this text meant precisely what it said—that those of us who were in Christ Jesus had been liberated by the grace of God from the obligation to achieve perfection. I was flabbergasted, but also immensely relieved.

Some four years later, I encountered again the message of God's grace in an extraordinarily powerful way. Once again, the encounter occurred in a university classroom. This time, however, the setting was not a church college but a state university—the University of Iowa where I was working on my doctorate in the field of religion. And the class was not on Romans, but on Martin Luther. The Professor was George Forell. I shall never forget the day when Forell explained Luther's concept of *simul justus et peccator* (simultaneously justified *and* a sinner) - a far cry from my earlier childhood understanding that I would have to utter a prayer of contrition before I could possibly be accepted by Almighty God. The truth is, I found Luther incredibly liberating, so much so that Luther's theology of justification by grace through faith has formed the bedrock of my spiritual orientation from that day to this.

And so I speak in this essay not as a Lutheran in a formal, confessional sense, but as a Lutheran in terms of my own spiritual commitments, at least in certain fundamental respects. I also speak as a university professor deeply concerned for the integrity of the academic enterprise. This means that I have asked myself countless times over the past twenty-five years, "How can the Lutheran worldview sustain

the life of the mind?" I hope in this paper to share some perspectives on that question.

Some Comparisons

We will grasp those perspectives far better if we begin by comparing the Lutheran heritage with three other Christian traditions. I want to ask first about the theological resources the Reformed tradition brings to the task of higher education, and how that tradition is equipped to sustain the life of the mind. I want to begin with the Reformed model since that model is so widely known and embraced in many Protestant circles of church-related higher education. Then, I want to ask the very same questions regarding Mennonites, on the one hand, and Roman Catholics, on the other. Once we ask and answer these questions, we will be in a good position to ask about the special niche Lutheran colleges and universities occupy in the world of church-related higher education in the United States.

A Reformed Model

If we ask how the Reformed tradition can sustain the life of the mind, the answer has everything to do with the original vision of John Calvin. Simply put, Calvin sought to transform Geneva, Switzerland into a model kingdom of God. To achieve this goal, he sought to place every facet of Genevan life—its religion, its politics, its music and its art—squarely under the sovereignty of God. Ever since those early days, this same vision has motivated Calvinists to bring all human life and culture under the sovereign sway of God's control. Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch statesman and philosopher, expressed this vision well: "There is not a square inch on the whole plain of human existence over which Christ, who is Lord over all, does not proclaim: 'This is Mine!'"¹

Clearly, the passion to transform human culture into the Kingdom of God is the driving genius of the Reformed tradition, and it is precisely this vision that sustains the life of the mind in many Reformed institutions of higher learning. Reformed educators seek to place the entire curriculum—and every course within the curriculum—under the sovereignty of God. According to this vision, all learning should be Christian in both purpose and orientation. For this reason, Reformed educators employ three fundamental concepts that underscore these objectives.

The first and most important of those concepts is a notion popularized by Abraham Kuyper, the notion of a *Christian worldview*. As Albert Wolters points out, Kuyper argued

that "Calvinism was not just a theology or a system of ecclesiastical polity but a complete worldview with implications for all of life, implications which must be worked out and applied in such areas as politics, art, and scholarship." With such a worldview, Kuyper believed, Christianity could provide broad cultural leadership in the nineteenth century and compete head to head with other perspectives like socialism or Darwinism or positivism.²

Central to the notion of a Christian worldview stands the second conviction, the notion that *all truth is God's truth*. By this phrase, Reformed educators mean to say that God is the author not only of our faith, but also of every facet of the world in which we live. If this is true, then there can be no discrepancy between Christian convictions and authentic knowledge regarding other aspects of human life. It is therefore possible to understand every facet of the natural sciences, of the social sciences, and of religion and the humanities in the light of Christian faith without running the risk of intellectual dishonesty.

It is precisely this conviction that breathes life into the third concept employed by Reformed educators: *the integration of faith and learning*. Because all truth is God's truth, all learning should be integrated into a coherent understanding of reality, informed by explicitly Christian convictions. No one has expressed the theological rationale for this perspective better than Arthur Holmes in his classic book, *The Idea of a Christian College*. There Holmes argues: "When the apostle writes that in Christ 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2:3), he refers . . . to [the fact that] Jesus Christ is . . . Creator and Lord of every created thing. All our knowledge of anything comes into focus around that fact. We see nature, persons, society, and the arts and sciences in proper relationship to their divine Creator and Lord. . . . The truth is a coherent whole by virtue of the common focus that ties it all into one."³

It is incumbent, therefore, upon Reformed educators to integrate explicitly Christian convictions into every branch of learning and, more than that, to discover those common, Christocentric threads that transform all fields of learning into one coherent whole.

Finally, this triad of ideas - a *Christian worldview*, *all truth is God's truth*, and *the integration of faith and learning* - this triad of ideas sustains another notion that is critical to at least one version of the Reformed understanding of reality: the notion of *secularization*. The truth is, one finds in the Reformed tradition two perspectives on this theme. First, Calvin himself argued that "the Spirit of God [is] the sole

fountain of truth," whether one finds that truth in the secular sphere or in divine revelation.⁴ At the same time, following another impulse in Calvin, many contemporary Reformed thinkers view the secular as a hindrance to the Christian presence in the world and therefore seek to overcome it by transforming it into the Kingdom of God.⁵

From this latter perspective, secularization occurs when there is even one dimension of human life that escapes the sovereignty of God, or when we fail to bring all of reality under the umbrella of a distinctly Christian worldview. Because the possibility of secularization is so real in this context, the notion of a *slippery slope* is a metaphor that many in this tradition take very seriously. This means that if one hopes to avoid the slippery slope toward secularization, the integration of faith and learning around a distinctly Christian worldview becomes absolutely imperative.

This consideration will become important when we compare the Reformed tradition with Lutheranism, on the one hand, and Catholicism, on the other. For if some in the Reformed tradition argue that the slippery slope to secularization is a real and present danger, both the Lutheran and Catholic traditions acknowledge the secular as a legitimate vehicle of the grace of God.

Now we must finally ask, "How can the Reformed tradition sustain the life of the mind?" Clearly, it does so by integrating faith and learning around a distinctly Christian worldview. One can identify at least two great strengths of this perspective, whether one subscribes to the Reformed worldview or not. In the first place, it overcomes fragmentation with its wholistic approach to learning. And in the second place, it provides students with a clearly defined standpoint from which they can discriminate between competing perspectives and worldviews. And if one cares about relating faith to learning at all, one is likely to find the Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God over the entire learning process extraordinarily compelling.

But to what extent does the Reformed perspective encourage academic freedom and genuine interaction with pluralism and diversity? There are two answers to that question. First, if a given scholar embraces the Reformed worldview, and is willing to understand all reality from the standpoint of that perspective, she or he will experience substantial academic freedom. Arthur Holmes, among others, has made this point abundantly clear.

Academic freedom is valuable only when there is a prior commitment to the truth. And commitment to the truth is

fully worthwhile only when that truth exists in One who transcends both the relativity of human perspectives and the fears of human concern.⁶

On the other hand, while the Reformed perspective allows the scholar substantial freedom to search for penultimate truths within the context of an all-embracing Christian worldview, the Reformed perspective is always susceptible to the twin risks of triumphalism and distortion. A hypothetical case in point might be a class in world religions. How, for example, would one study Buddhism from the standpoint of a Christian worldview without either distorting Buddhism into something it is not or debunking Buddhism in favor of a triumphalist Christian perspective?

And yet, the Reformed tradition contains at its core a powerful sentiment that can undermine triumphalism. That sentiment is simply the historic Reformed insistence on the finitude of humankind and of all human thinking and constructions. Arthur Holmes points squarely to that conviction when he writes, "Truth is not yet fully known; every academic discipline is subject to change, correction, and expansion—even theology." Holmes further notes that even worldview construction must take on tentative dimensions. A Christian worldview, he argues, is merely "exploratory, not a closed system worked out once and for all but an endless undertaking. . . . It remains open-ended because the task is so vast that to complete it would require the omniscience of God."⁷

And yet, the notion that God has called upon His saints to renovate the world is such an overpowering theme in the Reformed tradition that the profoundly Calvinist theme of human finitude and brokenness sometimes gets lost in the shuffle.

A Mennonite Model

When we turn from the Reformed to the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition, we quickly discover that we have entered into a frame of reference radically different from the Reformed perspective. The first thing we notice is that the starting point for Mennonites has more to do with wholistic living than with cognition, more to do with ethics than with intellect. One faculty member at Goshen College summarized very nicely the difference between the Reformed and Mennonite models when she observed that if the Reformed model is fundamentally cerebral and transforms living by thinking, the Mennonite model transforms thinking by living.

More precisely, Mennonites begin their task by seeking to implement a vision of discipleship that takes its cue from the radical teachings of Jesus. They take seriously Jesus' words when he counseled his followers to abandon self in the interest of others, or when he charged his disciples to practice humility, simplicity, and non-violence. Their's is a radical vision, to be sure, and one that stands almost entirely out of synch with the values of the larger culture.

One who is unaccustomed to the Mennonite frame of reference might well ask what this perspective has to do with the life of the mind. How can unconventional virtues like these possibly sustain the values we associate with the academy? Put another way, how does one move from Christocentric living to critical and pluralistic thinking?

We can answer that question in three ways. First, we must recall that sixteenth-century Anabaptism originated in the very womb of dissent. In a world that prized lockstep uniformity, Anabaptists dared to question the status quo. It matters little that their dissent began with lifestyle commitments, not with high-level theoretical formulations. Regardless of their starting point, sixteenth-century Anabaptists proved time and again their commitment to independent thinking. If a willingness to question conventional wisdom stands at the heart of the academic enterprise, then surely the Anabaptist heritage offers important resources for sustaining the life of the mind.

Second, Mennonites routinely counsel one another to abandon self in the interest of others and to abandon narrow nationalism in the interest of world citizenship. For this reason, service to other human beings, especially to the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed throughout the world, stands at the heart of the Mennonite witness. If we ask how a global service commitment like this can sustain the life of the mind, the answer is not hard to find. It is difficult to abandon self for the sake of others in any meaningful sense unless one is prepared to take seriously those "others," their cultural contexts, and their points of view. This means that Mennonite colleges, precisely because of their service orientation, are prepared to take seriously one of the cardinal virtues of the modern academy: the emphasis on pluralism and diversity.

If one wishes to see how this commitment might play itself out in an academic context, one need only consider the international studies program at Goshen College where eighty percent of all students spend one entire semester in a third world culture where they serve, on the one hand, and seek to learn that country's history, cultural traditions, and

language, on the other.

Finally, because of its historic emphasis on humility, the Mennonite tradition prepares its scholars to embrace one of the cardinal virtues of the academic guild: the willingness to admit that my understandings may be fragmentary and incomplete and that, indeed, I could be wrong.

For all these reasons, the Mennonite commitment to a life of radical discipleship can contribute in substantial ways to a vigorous life of the mind. Yet, we must also acknowledge that while the Mennonite commitment to stand with a radical Jesus is surely one of their greatest strengths, it can also be a serious liability in the arena of higher education. Ironically, the very commitment that has often inspired humility, dissent, and respect for cultural diversity can also inspire narrowness and sectarian exclusivity. This can happen in several ways, when Mennonites, for example, allow the radical teachings of Jesus to become little more than the substance of ethnic folkways, or when Mennonites take seriously the ethical mandates of Jesus without embracing with equal seriousness the grace of God whereby He forgives us *in spite of* our failings and shortcomings.

A Roman Catholic Model

When we ask about a Roman Catholic model for higher education, the first thing we notice is the diversity that characterizes Catholic institutions of higher learning. After all, Catholic colleges and universities were established not by the church *per se* but by a variety of religious orders that bring to the task of higher education a diversity of emphases. Nonetheless, we find in all Catholic colleges and universities certain uniquely Catholic dimensions that sustain the life of the mind.

The first of these dimensions is *the sacramental principle* which points to the fact that the natural world and even elements of human culture can serve as vehicles by which the grace of God is mediated to human beings. This conviction allows Catholic educators to take the world seriously on its own terms and to interact with the world as it is.

If some Reformed educators argue that the world and the contents of human culture are fundamentally secular if not brought under the sovereign sway of the Lord Jesus Christ, many Catholic educators, affirming the sacramental principle, take sharp issue with that contention. Alice Gallin, former executive director of the Association for Catholic Colleges and Universities, for example, has argued that "'secular' is not simply nor always the opposite of

‘sacred,’ for in a Christian sacramental view of reality, the secular has a legitimate role and one that is congruent with and not opposed to faith or religion.”⁸

This is why David O’Brien of the College of the Holy Cross points to one of the documents of Vatican II, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World*, as a virtual “magna charta” for Catholic colleges and universities. It functions in this way, O’Brien argued, since it affirms “the study of the human sciences, respect for non-Catholic, secular culture, dialogue with those beyond the church, and service to society,” all in the context of the sacramental principle.⁹ Two other Catholic educators—Emmanuel Renner and Hilary Thimmesch, writing in *Models for Christian Higher Education*—argue that “secularization could very well mean sacramentalization to those who recognized the presence of God in the world.”¹⁰

In a word, the sacramental principle sustains the life of the mind by placing a very great value both on the natural world and on human culture, and by reminding us that these realms are fully legitimate, whether transformed by the rule of Christ or not. For this reason, the notion of a slippery slope to secularization scarcely makes sense in a Roman Catholic context.

The second characteristic that allows the Catholic tradition to sustain the life of the mind is *the universality of the Catholic faith*. As a global church, Catholicism embraces believers from every corner of the world, people who hold a variety of political ideologies, who speak a myriad of tongues, who represent virtually every nationality in the world, and who reflect every social and economic class on the planet today. Not only is Catholicism universal in this very tangible sense; it is also intentionally universal from a theological point of view.

The universality of the Catholic tradition *should* permit the Catholic university to prize pluralism and diversity and to find a legitimate place at the table for every conversation partner. Many have argued this case, but no one has done so more effectively than Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, President Emeritus of the University of Notre Dame. “The Catholic university,” Hesburgh writes:

must be a bridge across all the chasms that separate modern people from each other: the gaps between young and old, men and women, rich and poor, black and white, believer and unbeliever, potent and weak, east and west, material and spiritual, scientist and humanist, developed and less developed, and all the rest. To be such a mediator, the Catholic university, as universal, must be

*engaged with, and have an interest in, both edges of every gulf, must understand each, encompass each in its total community and build a bridge of understanding and love.*¹¹

This notion of the Catholic university as *bridge*, rooted in the universality of the Catholic faith, can play itself out in some very concrete ways, most notably in faculty hiring policies. On the one hand, Notre Dame has sought to create that bridge by hiring not only a diversity of faculty from a variety of faith traditions and no tradition at all, but also by insuring “the continuing presence of a predominant number of Catholic intellectuals” on the faculty, as the university’s president mandated in 1993.¹² On the other hand, many Catholic institutions, grounding themselves in that same concern for universality, demonstrate little or no concern with this issue. David O’Brien reports, for example, that “a Jesuit dean [at Georgetown] told the faculty that, while wisdom rooted in faith remained central at Georgetown, ‘a person’s religion plays no part in hiring, tenure, promotion, the awarding of grants or the securing of funds. In fact, most of us don’t know each other’s religious beliefs.’”¹³

The final Catholic commitment I wish to consider is one Monika Hellwig describes as *the communitarian nature of redemption*. At its core, this notion holds that the church is not simply the hierarchical magisterium; instead, the church is comprised of *all* the people of God, scattered throughout the world, who together form this community of faith. This means that the life of the mind, if understood only in cognitive terms, is less than adequate in a Catholic university. Instead, as Hellwig notes, the life of the mind must translate itself into *genuine bonds of friendship and mutual respect and support [which] are envisaged as the core of the educational enterprise, because not only book learning but human formation for leadership and responsibility in all walks of life are sought through the community experience of higher education.*¹⁴

Precisely because it takes “seriously the unity of the human race,” the communitarian dimension suggests that Catholic colleges and universities should place scholarship and teaching in the service of justice and peace for all the peoples of the world. To a great extent, Catholic institutions—and especially Jesuit institutions—have done just that. As David O’Brien observes, “president after president [in the world of Catholic higher education] has repeated the words of the American bishops insisting that pursuit of justice and human dignity is an essential work of a Catholic institution.”¹⁵

It is clear that the Roman Catholic tradition is at home with

human reason, with the natural world, with secular human culture, with human history, with human beings who stand both inside and outside of the Catholic faith, and with human beings in every conceivable social circumstance. It is precisely this dimension that renders the Catholic faith, at least in theory, so compatible with the ideals of the modern university.

At the same time, it is entirely possible for the Catholic tradition to stand at odds with the life of the mind. This can happen when dogma displaces inquiry, when orthodoxy undermines the search for truth, or when Catholics absolutize those dimensions of Catholic faith that might otherwise have the potential to break through their own particularity.

A Lutheran Model

Finally, we must ask, "What resources does the Lutheran tradition offer for sustaining the life of the mind?"

The first resource is Luther's insistence on human finitude and the sovereignty of God. To speak of human finitude is to point not only to our frailties, our limitations, and our estrangement from God, from other human beings, and from ourselves; it also points to the depth and breadth of sin that renders us incapable of knowing or doing the good. When Luther argues for God's sovereignty, therefore, his point is not that Christians should impose God's sovereignty on an unbelieving world. That would be an impossible absurdity. Rather, when Luther points to God's sovereignty, he always points at the very same time to human finitude. The sovereignty of God, therefore, means that I am not God, that my reason is inevitably impaired, and that my knowledge is always fragmentary and incomplete.

In the context of higher education and the life of the mind, this position means that every scholar must always confess that he or she could be wrong. Apart from this confession, there can be no serious life of the mind, for only when we confess that we might be wrong can we engage in the kind of conversation that takes seriously other voices. Further, it is only when we confess that we might be wrong that we are empowered to critically scrutinize our own theories, our own judgments, and our own understandings. Put another way, in the Lutheran tradition, doubt is always the partner of faith. In his marvelous book, *Exiles from Eden*, Mark Schwehn quotes James Gustafson to the effect that "we believe what we question and question what we believe."¹⁶ Or, as the father of the boy with the evil spirit confessed to Jesus in Mark 9, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

One who refuses to confess that he or she might be wrong has forfeited the ability to engage in critical scholarship and really has no legitimate place in the academy.

Because of the Lutheran insistence on human finitude, Lutheran theology always has the capacity to break through its own particularity. Authentic Lutherans can never absolutize their own perspectives, even their theological perspectives. They must always be reassessing and rethinking, and they must always be in dialogue with themselves and with others. This is the genius of the Lutheran tradition, and this is the first reason why the Lutheran worldview can sustain the life of the mind.

The second resource the Lutheran tradition offers for sustaining the life of the mind is Luther's notion of paradox, a theme that stands at the heart of Lutheran thought. As we know, Luther gloried in the notion of paradox: the King of the universe born in a manger, God Himself nailed to a Roman cross, the Christian who is both free and servant at one and the same time, or finally, the Christian who is simultaneously justified and a sinner.

But of all these Lutheran paradoxes, there is none more supportive of the life of the mind than Luther's notion of the two kingdoms. In his view, the Christian lives in the world and in the Kingdom of God - or, put another way, in nature and in grace-and does so simultaneously. In fact, in Luther's vision, God employs the finite dimensions of the natural world as vehicles which convey his grace to human beings. As Luther often affirmed, *finitum capax infiniti* or, the finite is the bearer of the infinite. At this point, the Lutheran tradition greatly resembles Catholic sacramental understandings.

The authentic Lutheran vision, therefore, never calls for Lutherans to transform the secular world into the Kingdom of God as many in the Reformed tradition have advocated over the years. Nor does it call for Lutherans to separate from the world as the heirs of the Anabaptists sometimes seek to do. Instead, the Christian must reside in two worlds at one and the same time: the world of nature and the world of grace. The Christian in Luther's view, therefore, is free to take seriously *both* the secular world *and* the Kingdom of God.

This notion carries great implications for the life of the mind, especially if we think of the life of the mind as one which fosters *genuine conversation* in which all the voices at the table are taken seriously. Clearly, in the Lutheran context, there is a "Christian worldview." But in the light of

Luther's two kingdoms, there is no need to impose that worldview on other voices. Nor is it important to "integrate faith and learning" around that perspective. Rather, one seeks to bring the secular world and a Christian perspective into *conversation* with one another. Luther's notion of the two kingdoms is therefore fully capable of sustaining a commitment to the Christian faith and a serious engagement with the secular world at one and the same time. For this reason, the notion of a slippery slope to secularization makes no more sense in a Lutheran context than it does in a Catholic context, and for very similar reasons.

While the Lutheran tradition possesses extraordinary resources for sustaining the life of the mind, the strength of the Lutheran tradition is also its weakness. As we have seen, the notion of paradox is central to the Lutheran tradition, but it is all too easy to sacrifice one side of the paradox in the interest of the other. When the paradox dissolves in this way, the risks can be absolutism on the one hand and relativism on the other.

These temptations are especially apparent when one considers Luther's understanding of the two kingdoms. If we accentuate the Kingdom of God at the expense of the secular world, we run the risk of absolutizing our religious vision. Here one thinks, for example, of the scholastic theologians who absolutized the dynamic, paradoxical qualities of Luther's thought into a rigid, airtight system. It is safe to say that this version of Lutheran theology is simply inimical to the life of the mind. Yet, rigid codification of Lutheran thought occurs even within some Lutheran colleges and universities.

On the other hand, if we accentuate the secular world at the expense of the Kingdom of God, we run the risk of relativism since we have diminished our transcendent point of reference.

This means that if Lutheran colleges hope to draw on their Lutheran heritage to sustain the life of the mind, they must find some way to keep alive the heart and soul of Luther's original vision, namely, the paradox of the Gospel and the

affirmation of the sovereignty of God and the finitude of humankind.

Conclusion

Finally, I want to make a few observations regarding the dilemmas Lutheran colleges and universities inevitably face as they seek to interpret the Lutheran vision to potential constituents.

In the first place, because the Lutheran tradition thrives on paradox, ambiguity, thoughtfulness, and reflection, it is difficult to explain a Lutheran institution that genuinely lives out of the Lutheran worldview. As the director of development for one Lutheran institution told me a couple of years ago, "It's tough to market ambiguity." This is all the more true in a "sound bite" culture such as ours. How can one possibly explain a Lutheran institution to a potential student or a potential donor in a sound bite?

While in one sense this may seem like a disadvantage for Lutheran institutions, in another sense this may well be a potential asset. Because Lutheran theological resources are unique in the world of church-related higher education, and because those resources can do so much to sustain the life of the mind, Lutheran colleges and universities have the potential to grow into absolutely first class institutions of higher learning. This means that while Lutheran educators may not be able to explain to potential donors or potential students all the intricacies of a Lutheran worldview, they can explain that Lutheran colleges and universities offer a first class education where the life of the mind is nurtured, where all questions are taken seriously, where critical thinking is encouraged, and where a diversity of cultures are valued; and that these virtues all grow from deep and profound commitment to the Christian faith.

In my view, this is the niche—and it is a special niche indeed—that Lutheran colleges and universities occupy in the world of church-related higher education in the United States.

NOTES

1. Abraham Kuyper, "Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring" (Amsterdam: Kruyt, 1880), p. 32, cited in James D. Bratt and Ronald A. Wells, "Piety and Progress: A History of Calvin College" in Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian, eds., *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twentieth-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 143.
2. Albert Wolters, "On the Idea of Worldview and Its Relation to Philosophy," in Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw, eds., *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science* (New York: University Press of America, 1989), p. 20.
3. Arthur Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 17.
4. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.15, in John T. McNeill and Ford Lewis Battles, eds., *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), pp. 273-75.
5. See Nicholas Wolterstorff's important discussion of the role of the secular in Reformed thought in *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 12 and 40-41.
6. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, p. 69.
7. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, pp. 58-59 and 66.
8. Alice Gallin, "American Church Related Higher Education: Comparison and Contrast," ACHE presentation, December 29, 1992, p. 1.
9. David O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), p. 49.
10. Emmanuel Renner and Hilary Thimmesh, "Faith and Learning at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University" in *Models*, p. 37.
11. Theodore Hesburgh, "The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University" in Hesburgh, ed., *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 9-11.
12. Cited in O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church*, p. 91.
13. Renner and Thimmesh, "Faith and Learning" in *Models*, pp. 42-43; and O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church*, p. 90.
14. Hellwig, "What Can the Roman Catholic Tradition Contribute?" p. 21.
15. O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church*, pp. 86-87.
16. Mark Schwehn, *Exiles From Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 49.

The following are excerpts selected from a much longer text, presently looking for a publisher who is willing to look at something that is both Theological and written with a sense of humor. Readers interested in other entries should correspond with Professors Skrade and Porter through Skrade in the Department of Religion, Capital University.

THE SKEPTICAL THEOLOGIAN'S DICTIONARY

Spencer Porter and Carl Skrade

A

answer *noun* 1. A response to a question or the solution to a problem. 2. In our times it has come to be assumed that questions are defined in terms of their answers, but in theology this is not so. In fact this disjunction is one cardinal reason that both theological language and poetry are seen as strange or even empty of content. We educate ourselves and each other to search for answers; and when we encounter a question which does not fit the mould, we have no idea of what to do next. 3. In theology and in poetry the answers are less important than the questions themselves, which are often answered again and again yet never answered. Thus Jesus asks Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) The dialogue which ensues is important, and Peter's answers are interesting and informative; but the question stands on its own quite apart from what Peter said. It is a sign, and an unfortunate one at that, that the modern age has spilled tons of blood over differing interpretations of the answers while refusing to live in the mystery of the question. See *problem* and *question*.

ark *noun* 1. An especially unseaworthy boat built by Noah, who was not a seaman at all! (Genesis 9:20) For a time, it is said, this boat contained the whole of the human race and culture. God regretted ever having made this race, but for some reason, never truly explained, he relented and saved this small remnant. 2. The first of several demonstrations in the Bible that God makes very odd choices when calling people to vocations. It would seem that when it comes to reading résumés God is without a clue. 3. The ark may also be seen as a metaphor for the church and the graces which may be obtained by being within it: much better than the alternative even if the stench is ferocious!

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B

belief *noun* 1. The act of thinking that some story or doctrine is true, based either on evidence accessible to all or on some special insight available to only a few. 2. While virtually no one wishes to believe either stories or doctrines that are false, it is odd that belief is seen to be a virtue. It is not, and elevating belief to a virtue generally results in idolatry. "To believe falsely" seems to be an oxymoron in all languages. 3. At its best belief is a bet which hope places against the boxing with reality which passes for thinking in most of the world. At its worst belief comes from the fear which causes the boxing. Most of us struggle with a mixture of the two, and the story of the man with the epileptic son (Mark 9:17-24) brings this into focus. 4. Those who would make belief itself into a virtue ought to compare the demons who knew and believed without doubt that Jesus was the Messiah (Mark 5:1-20 and many other passages) to the apostles who were still in the dark at the end of the story! (Mark 16:11) 5. A common error is confusing belief with faith (which see). This error is not innocent as such belief shades into doctrine then dogma then rigid orthodoxy then inquisition. Belief can and has become a primary defense against newness, possibility, and freedom. Such a defense has led in modern times to both violence and depression, the twentieth century's diseases of choice. There is little doubt that God prefers atheism to many of these forms of belief. If this were not so, Jesus would not have been as sharp with the demons as he always was. 6. It is thought that it is differences in belief that divide the churches, and theologians of all sorts claim to love the truth and speak it and to hate error. It is not surprising in the least that truth in one tradition will often coincide with error in another. The real truth is that all of our dogmas are wrong to some extent. A great scandal of the church is that differences in belief - especially those that are difficult to understand and explain - are used to divide the church. Since the church is a human institution, these divisions must have more to do with interests and property than with principles of any kind. See *faith*.

C

church *noun* 1. On a mystical level the Body of Christ and the company of all faithful people. 2. On the human level a temporary and contingent organization. It is a sign of grace and a sense of humor that God put up with it. The true church may be described by the acronym from computer science WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get). It is a community - often shapeless and goalless - of those who have been grasped by that awe-filled freedom for which Christ has set us free. (Galatians 5:1) 3. It is both sanctuary and refuge, which entries see. At the church's best it is possible to meet within its body, aware that everyone in it is as much a sinner and is as much saved and healed as everyone else. 4. Eventually the church will be out of business. There was no church in Eden (Genesis 2:15-25), and there will be none in the new heaven either (Revelation 21:22). In the present time however, the church is an institution or collection of them, which own property, has laws and hierarchies, and quarrels with itself. Like all institutions it can not imagine the world without itself, and so it spends much of its energy perpetuating itself all the while vainly imagining that the reign of God depends on itself. It does not, and the Galilean carpenter whose name it takes had no interest in institutions of any kind - except to subvert those which held the people he loved in bondage.

comedy *noun* 1. A dramatic form designed to entertain by calling on the lighter human emotions. As such, comedy may use wit, buffoonery, ridicule, and satire to amuse - and enlighten. Comedic stories have happy endings except for the villains and butts of the jokes. 2. What a Bob Hope one-liner is not, but what a Robin Williams one-liner is. 3. The human story spiraling upward towards its unfolding and fulfillment. 4. The 'yes' within the 'no,' the light within the dark, the joy within brokenness. 5. The suddenness and surprise of grace. 6. The holy joke which is sprung whenever one realizes that what is needed is already in hand. 7. The Bible contains a fair amount of comedy; and if pious folk did not read it all so grimly, the book would be enjoyed much more than it is. Examples are the story of Ruth, the story of Gideon (Judges 6-8), several of the parables of Jesus, and the Book of Revelation. See *grace*, *parable*, *poetry* and *tragedy*.

F

fence *noun* 1. A barrier designed to separate pieces of God's creation from his creatures. 2. The poet (R. Frost) said "that good fences make good neighbors," but he was being ironic, a fact missed by the majority of his readers. Fences offer the

illusion of safety as they can for a time effect real separation, but eventually what is being avoided will get in somehow. 3. Several centuries ago churches came to have fences (known as altar or communion rails) inside to protect the altar and the priest from wandering farm animals. Soon the separation was between the clergy and the laity, and to some extent that division persists to this day. To be sure, certain members of the laity have been able to enter the area inside, known as the chancel, but only under carefully prescribed conditions. 5. At the time of the Reformation most Protestant church leaders saw that the division was artificial or worse, and the rails came down in most places. Even in England the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, decreed that the faithful surround the communion table. This never caught on; Cranmer was burned at the stake in 1555; and fences persist in Anglican churches to this day. During the 1960's the Roman Catholic Church radically changed their liturgy and their existing fences are now used only rarely.

H

heaven *noun* 1. Imagined to be a place of eternal bliss in spite of the fact that no one has sufficient imagination to picture either bliss or eternity. Also thought to be somewhere in the sky or beyond it. With our modern understanding of the structure of the universe, this idea has become very difficult to believe. Some imagine an existence after death for the elect somewhere up, but it has become impossible to see in these images much beyond the making of jokes. Floating above pink clouds in a white gown with wings while playing music on a golden harp does not strike the writers of this dictionary as being interesting. 2. Heaven is often imagined to be part of a system of rewards and punishments in which the just, or the faithful, or the chosen are given the ultimate grand prize while the rest of us go to hell. All such systems are individualistic and narcissistic, but they do appeal to those who imagine themselves either among the elect or among those who run the system. It is difficult to comprehend the amount of fruitless anguish which has consumed those who have worried over what might await them after death. 3. Heaven is better seen as the state of being completely in the sight and care of God while knowing that such is the case. (Hell is being radically apart from God, if such be possible.) Either heaven or hell is best seen as real possibility in the now. 4. It is much more fruitful to use the word and image of paradise. Paradise has no fixed location or time in our witness, and we leave it to God to create such a place and life. See *hell* and *paradise*.

hell *noun* 1. Thought to be a place of torment and the just

desserts of the unfaithful. Such requires both an ill-tempered and vengeful God and doubtful manipulations of scripture and sensibility. These things come from imagining extensions of narcissism beyond the grave. Nonetheless, orthodox "keepers of the keys" place great stock in a system of rewards and punishments. 2. In this individualistic age many do imagine that one can be punished eternally for not believing the right thing, for not doing the right thing, or for not belonging to the right group. These views are held chiefly by those who think that they believe the right thing, do the right things, and belong to the one true church. We have no wish to be judgmental, but it does strike us as at least possible that the motives are self-justification and fear. 3. Actually to be in hell is to be forgotten by God and unknown to God. It is not, however, clear that such a state is possible even if that should be a person's deepest desire. (Psalm 139: 7-12) Neither is it clear that any one of us receives his or her just desserts. (Psalm 103: 8-14) 4. It is much more likely that those who choose to flee from God will get their wish - for a time. Nonetheless, it seems certain that God will not cease to love them. If we have been admonished to love our enemies (Matthew 5: 43-8), will not God do the same for those who choose to be his enemies? 5. It follows that both heaven and hell are vital symbols which are bound neither to a linear sense of time nor to a system of justice but which are ever present and intimate possibilities. If we try to move beyond this simple statement, we would be attempting to change God from immeasurable mystery into that which we can manage. See *grace* and *heaven*.

M

miracle *noun* 1. Describes any phenomenon in the natural world which goes against the laws of nature, which is beneficent, and which is, therefore, caused by a supernatural being. 2. This is a modern definition which came into use with William of Ockham in the fourteenth century, and it is clear that the biblical writers had no such understanding. The distinction between miraculous events and the rest became prominent only after the Enlightenment when, as Laplace remarked to Napoleon, the hypothesis of God was no longer necessary. Miracle then emerged as supernatural diddling with the laws of nature, congenially and apologetically retaining a diminishing preserve for the action of a rational and domesticated God. See *gaps*. 3. Any event - natural vs. supernatural is not the issue - which opens to and drives home the truth about reality, about the relationship between God and humanity. As such the miraculous is always revelation, the laying bare of truth, and revelation is always decreation. See *monotheism*. All things are potential bearers of miracle. 4. The occurrences of the word in the

English Bible are few, and it is always possible to find another word that is closer to the original, such as sign, wonder, or act of power. 5. The great miracles in the Christian tradition are the *creation* and the *incarnation*, which entries see. Neither is plausible, likely, or reasonable, but then neither is the very existence of God or anything else. See *metatheology* and *science*.

Q

question *noun* 1. A sentence or statement which invites or requires a response. 2. There are several varieties, but the ones that are of the most interest to theology are often not even seen as questions at all. 3. The most common types are the ones that either have answers or the presumption of an answer. Most of what passes for education in the modern age consist of learning to state the questions and expound the answers. In this way both students and teachers can be assessed, i.e., judged, and it becomes possible to reform and improve education. Thus students in school will be sure that Boise is the capital of Montana, and students in Sunday School will be sure that Noah's wife was Joan of Ark, and our educational professionals will know what to do. 4. On another level other professionals will do research and find new answers and perhaps even Joan's Ark. This will provide new information and larger and larger libraries, and soon the human race will know more stuff than it could ever use. 5. Nonetheless, research in itself is more boon than bane, and it can even be done on the biblical texts. Such is certainly fine, and so it is that people ask questions of the Bible. They expect answers too; for what else have they been educated? At this point the witnesses of religion and history veer far from the culture, and the people who live in that culture find themselves in a strange land indeed. The Bible is filled with questions, and so is the history, but they are of a wholly different order. They may not even have "correct" answers, and the skills of professionals won't help either. The one who goes to the text in search of answers to questions is very likely to find that the text is asking rather than answering. This is disconcerting to say the least, and the result is often an even more diligent search for answers as if the text were some giant puzzle which can only be solved by great effort. The search is interesting, but ultimately ends where it began, that is where the question from the text was encountered. 6. Some examples will illustrate what happens. "What is truth?" (John 18:38) [No answer is given.] "What is his (God's) name?" "What shall I say to them (the Israelites)?" (Exodus 3:13-4) [The answer given is beyond human comprehension.] "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) [The answer is open; we may respond as we like. If this were not so we would have no freedom worthy of the

term.] Sometimes the question is implied: "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you." (Luke 17: 5-6) [Well? Probably not.] "Whoever does not love abides in death." (1John 3: 14) [Again, well?] 7. These questions are always open and honestly so. This is rarely understood, and many earnest folk believe that all of them are in the same class as "What is the capital of Montana?" Those who are on the right side will, therefore, study and learn the right answer. To be sure, some answers are better than others, and Boise is in Idaho. It is, however, much closer to the truth to say that God's freedom is a real freedom (Galatians 5:1) and not simply the freedom to chose one's slave master. If this misunderstood and under appreciated gift of God were truly taken for what it is, the questions that we find, or which find us, could be seen for what they are. See *answer* and *puzzle*.

S

saint *noun* 1. A person who is chosen by God for a life of holiness. 2. This is both paradox and mystery because holiness is a property of God alone and because no person is capable of attaining it. Nonetheless, God does give special gifts to certain sinners that make them markers of God's holy actions in the world. The saint is given the gift of sight as few of us have. 3. A saint has, therefore, a profound sense of his or her own faults and sinfulness. In the second place he or she refuses to let this condition prevent the action that comes from being faithful, even as it is well understood what the likely outcome will be. A living saint is a sinner who has made significant progress in the transformation from self-centeredness to reality and Being, i.e., God. See *martyr*. 4. It is hard to imagine that anyone could live a life of being a saint all the time, and it is like - wise hard to imagine that anyone goes through life without

ever acquiring saintliness, at least for a time. 5. Dividing the human race into saints and sinners makes very little sense. Likewise with imagining that saints are dead sinners, whose lives have been edited by selective memories. See *sin* and *holiness*.

secular, the *noun* 1. The literal meaning is those things that are in time, in the sense of *chronos*. See *time*. 2. The antonym is the eternal, which stands for those things outside of *chronos* but inside *kairos* (God's sense of time). 3. The usual understanding is that the sacred is the opposite of the secular, but this is an error. Everything in creation is good and, therefore, sacred (Genesis 1:31), so it can not be that things within time are not good. 4. The distinctions made between sacred and secular times are useful to human beings, who after all have a dreadful time with Genesis 1:31, and God approves us. (Mark 2:23-8) 5. The secular may also refer to things not of the church, and so it is possible to refer to secular government or secular science simply to note that the structure of the visible church, which too is sinful, does not control these things. See *profane* and *sacred*.

T

trash *noun* 1. That which is discarded as being of no use and a chief result of modern commerce. A modern idol, worshiped by nearly everyone, is economic growth, and a clear measure of it is the amount of trash which a society produces. If by some means we could devise an economic system in which only what is needed would be purchased and consumed, a great economic depression would occur. By this logic trash is good. 2. In the logic of the biblical witnesses, trash can not exist. Everything that God made is good, indeed it is very good (Genesis 1:31), and it is only human blindness which causes us to believe that any one thing (or any one) is of no use or function.

DISCUSSION:

THE UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF GOD: BEYOND DIALECTICS AND RHETORIC

GREGORY A. CLARK

"I don't want to be deceived," he said. "I am looking to Reason to keep me from illusion." Jerry was one of my brightest philosophy majors. His father was a pastor. Under the influence of higher criticism of the Bible and Nietzsche, however, the effect of countless sermons and his religious upbringing had diminished. Jerry was convinced that his father was deceived and that Jerry himself had been brought up in a faith that was little more than wishful thinking. "Reason" was going to protect him from illusions that might try to trap him later in life.

The dichotomy is common and ancient: truth opposes illusion, reason opposes power, philosophy opposes rhetoric, and real argument opposes merely verbal links in discourse. Almost every philosopher since Plato, who sets out the dichotomy in the *Apology*, dwells on these oppositions. Interestingly, even those who chasten and restrict reason do not hesitate to make the opposition and condemn rhetoric. Alasdair MacIntyre offers up a familiar and representative lamentation: "In the forums of popular life rhetorical effectiveness in persuasion and manipulation prevails against rational argument."¹

The concepts of "power" and "violence" provide the basis for the opposition. According to philosophy, rhetoric values effectiveness and power, regardless of the rational merits of the case. Violence destroys or tears apart integrity -- the integrity of the will, of the mind, of the body. Rhetorical power becomes violent when it does not respect the rationality and will of the hearer, when it aims to impose the will of the speaker on the hearer.

While traditional philosophers want to avoid violence, postmodern philosophers think that violence is unavoidable, but that some forms of violence are better than others. That is, philosophers like Nietzsche and Deleuze maintain the dichotomy, but they defend the sophists. Everything is the will to power. Dialectical argument merely disguises the will that seeks to dominate other wills. It is not on that account less a will.

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Any criticism of the Enlightenment and contemporary Christian higher education must consider the relation postmodernism, (2) the ethic of love and peace espoused by the Christian Church, and (3) the meeting of (1) and (2) in the church-related college. I believe that we must think about how to construct a university where the rhetorical power of this dichotomy between rhetoric and dialectics no longer holds the minds of students like Jerry. We must both break down the dichotomy and learn to value the power of words.

Accordingly, I will begin with an account of MacIntyre's proposal, in his book *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, for a postliberal university. MacIntyre's postliberal university institutionalizes the conflict of wills that postmodernism claims is everywhere. I will then turn to John Milbank's criticism of MacIntyre's position. According to Milbank, MacIntyre's position is neither Christian nor postmodern. I will sketch a part of Milbank's criticism of MacIntyre in order to show some problems with taking the postliberal university as a model for a church-related college. Finally, I will offer a modest proposal for the form of discourse the should prevail in a church-related college.

I. The Postliberal University

In his *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, Alasdair MacIntyre distinguishes three types of universities. The preliberal university of 18th and 19th century Scotland and the United States could assume a fairly homogeneous and well-educated public. Aided by religious tests to exclude and promote faculty¹, it was able to advance considerably. The preliberal university produced a constrained agreement.

The liberal university claims to open its doors to all. By doing away with religious tests, it would promote progress and agreement in all areas of knowledge. The liberal university, then, claims to produce an unconstrained agreement. In fact, however, we can now see that the liberal university does impose constraints. Further, these constraints have cost the liberal university the resources to understand and to justify its own existence.

If we cannot return to the constrained agreement of the preliberal university, nor to the feigned unconstrained

agreement of the liberal university, where shall we go? MacIntyre suggests that we should develop a university system that will be a "place of constrained disagreement, or imposed participation in conflict, in which a central responsibility of higher education would be to initiate students into conflict."² What would this look like? MacIntyre continues,

Surely a set of rival universities would result, each modeled on, but improving upon, its own best predecessor. . . . And thus the wider society would be confronted with the claims of rival universities, each advancing its own enquiries in its own terms and each securing the type of agreement necessary to ensure the progress and flourishing of its enquiries by its own set of exclusions and prohibitions But then also required would be a set of institutionalized forums in which the debate between rival types of enquiry was afforded rhetorical expression.³

MacIntyre's postliberal university has two tiers, both of which emphasize constraint and conflict. First, the university must establish its own identity. This university will look much like the preliberal university that embodies a constrained agreement. That is to say, arguments alone are not enough to establish agreement; there must be some authority to enforce agreement. For the Thomist university, this authority will be the church, and ultimately the Pope.⁴

This is not a simple sectarianism, however. MacIntyre's sketch of the university is an attempt to institutionally embody a tradition and to allow for dialogue between other institutionalized versions of moral enquiry. If this were sectarian, they would never come into contact with each other. So, second, the universities in the system need to engage in open hostilities on a level fighting field. In spite of the claim, in *Three Rival Versions*, that this conflict will have a rhetorical expression, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* clearly indicates that these conflicts are mediated dialectically. Moral enquiry progresses, according to MacIntyre, through open argument, both within a tradition and across traditions. The best tradition will be able to solve the problems of other traditions and be able to account for the failure of the inferior tradition. Let us then define the postliberal university as a place of dialectically mediated conflict and constrained agreement. Such is the postmodern opportunity for the university according to MacIntyre.

II. The City of God

MacIntyre has come under attack by John Milbank in his *Theology and Social Theory*.⁵ According to Milbank, MacIntyre's move to dialectics in *Whose Justice? Which*

*Rationality?*⁶ shows that he is too much the philosopher and not sufficiently Christian or postmodern. Dialectics is itself a form of the will to power. Insofar as MacIntyre does not realize this, he has not yet crossed the bridge of postmodernity. Insofar as he still appeals to dialectics, he remains within an ontology of violence and has not yet taken up the cross of Christian peace.

I am interested in the second criticism for the purposes of this essay. That is, I want to ask if violence and conflict are necessary and constitutive parts of the life of the mind. If dialectics is itself the embodiment of conflict, how might we begin to think differently? In what follows, I will first draw the distinction between the ontology of violence and the ontology of peace. I will then contrast MacIntyre's Thomist postliberal university with the church-related college.

A. Counter Ontologies

An ontology of violence posits a primordial conflict that politics, morality, and dialectics each attempt to overcome or limit with another act of violence. Milbank finds an "ontology of violence" in the philosophy and institutions of the ancients, the moderns, and the postmoderns. Since the ancients *and* the postmoderns are committed to an ontology of violence, MacIntyre's choice between Aristotle and Nietzsche does not present us with true alternatives.

In contrast with the history of philosophy, Milbank finds an "ontology of peace" expressed in Augustine's *The City of God*. Peace is a harmonious agreement based in charity. Christianity posits an ontology of peace because God is the most basic reality, and the God of Christians is a God who is love in trinity and who created the universe out of generosity and love. Milbank argues that only Christianity provides an ontological option to violence. The church is that society which promotes and incarnates the charity made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

B. Counter Universities

While Milbank does not consider the implications of his criticism for a university or for a church-related college, *one* might easily generate a series of questions that extend the criticism to MacIntyre's proposal for the postliberal university. Is a "place of constrained disagreement, or imposed participation in conflict" compatible with a society founded on an ontology of peace? Can a higher education that is Christian both attend to its identity within the Christian tradition *and* engage in open hostilities as instituted in the postliberal university? Can a postliberal university exist in the City of God?

If MacIntyre's post-liberal university and the church-related college are rooted in mutually exclusive categories, then the postliberal university would amount to an institutionalized hostility to Christian identity. To take MacIntyre's postliberal university as the model for the church-related college would be to forfeit the college's identity in the mission of the church. I will argue that MacIntyre's postliberal university is modeled on an ontology of violence insofar as it defines itself by dialectical argument. The church-related college articulates an ontology of peace insofar as it embodies a history of faith and persuasion.

1. The Thomist University

Consider first the Thomist postliberal university. Thomism, for MacIntyre, is part of the history of philosophy or intellectual history.⁷ He reads Thomas, in the end, as a philosopher rather than as a theologian whose work reflects the faith and practice of the church. Thomism is a set of beliefs, an intellectual position, an extended dialectical argument, that is, a tradition.

A Thomism instituted in a postliberal university requires conflict. This conflict is mediated dialectically. Otherwise said, dialectic is the intellectual management of conflict. The Platonic dialogues, Aristotle's method, and Thomas's method show dialectics as the attempt to bring many competing voices into a unified harmony.⁸ This unified harmony is the Idea of the Good and of peace.⁹

Postmodernism asks whether dialectics *can* bring about such harmony. Socrates and Plato face this question when they confront the Sophists, and Aristotle confronts it as well, since "good" can be said in many ways. Plato, Aristotle, and many Thomisms were not entirely successful in achieving a harmony through dialectical means. Neither did the preliberal or liberal university succeed. While MacIntyre appeals to dialectics, agreement within the postliberal Thomist university is itself guaranteed by a decree of the Pope. If dialectics cannot establish harmony, "then only a merely 'effective' peace is possible, a 'secular' peace of temporarily suspended violence or regulated competition."¹⁰ That is, the conflict is only resolved by one party imposing their will on another.

2. The Church-Related College

Contrast the Thomist university with the nature of the church-related college. The church-related college differs from non-affiliated colleges in that it serves the mission of the church in some way. The church is the community of those people whose lives have been claimed by the God who is love and peace. The preeminence of the peace of the

Lord, however, is not established or shown dialectically, by managing conflict through argument. Rather, it is established by God in Jesus, and it is shown in the life and preaching of the church. Phillips Brooks says, *However, the Gospel may be capable of statement in dogmatic form, its truest element we know is not in dogma but in personal life. Christianity is Christ; and we can easily understand how a truth which is of such a peculiar character that a person can stand forth and say of it, "I am the Truth," must always be best conveyed through, must indeed be almost incapable of being perfectly conveyed except through, personality. And so some form of preaching must be essential to the prevalence and spread of the knowledge of Christ among men.*¹¹

Note two interrelated points. First, while dogmas are important and necessary, the church is not founded on dogma or a set of articles. Second, and this is crucial, this first point does not mean that we stop preaching. Jesus preached; Peter and Paul preached. In preaching, the church takes its native form. As a form of discourse, preaching's primary goal is not to establish any given set of ideas. The truth of the gospel is the person of Jesus, and this truth is communicated through the personality of the preacher as he or she preaches. Preaching articulates a counter-*logos* which is neither dialectical or sophistical rhetoric. It is more original than either. The Christian *logos* gives "pride of place to opinion (*doxa*), testimony (*marturia*) and persuasion (*pistis*)."¹² The God of peace is revealed through the power of the Word.

Both of these points help to clarify the difference between the Thomist university and the church-related college. The church-related college is not founded on any one doctrine or school of thought, and its goal is not to produce more and better scholars. Perhaps Thomism is a tradition of moral enquiry; Christianity is not. While Christianity has much to say about the things that concerned philosophers, it is not on that account oriented and guided by philosophy. Christianity is not one more competing vision of the good life. It is not graspable through dialectics; it is not itself promulgated through dialectics. It is a mode of discourse aiming to reveal the God of peace with whom the apostles were acquainted. "Perhaps," Milbank says, "we have to take more seriously the Biblical narratives . . . which presumably tell how things happened in the very idiom adopted by their users for the making-of-things-to-happen."¹³

Further, this "idiom," this preaching that humans can now be reconciled to God and to each other, contains an acid that cannot be neutralized by philosophical systems or arguments, and this too can be seen in the preaching of the

apostles. John Howard Yoder observes that the apostles did not request "free speech and room for one more stand in the Athenian marketplace of ideas for a new variant of already widely respected diaspora Judaism." Rather, *A handful of messianic Jews, moving beyond the defenses of their somewhat separate society to attack the intellectual bastions of majority culture, refused to contextualize their message by clothing it in the categories the world held ready. Instead, they seized the categories, hammered them into other shapes, and turned the cosmology on its head. . . . The development of a high Christology is the natural cultural ricochet of a missionary ecclesiology when it collides as it must with whatever cosmology explains and governs the world.*¹⁴

In the arena of ideas, Christians do not fight fairly. Which is to say that they don't fight. They do not pit Christian ideas against non-Christian ideas. Rather, they introduce the person of Christ who is irreducible to any and all ideas. Christianity will always oppose the absoluteness and adequacy of every system or idea, while refusing itself to be reduced to a system or an idea. Philosophy will always find Christianity an unassimilatable phenomenon. Like the Son of Man, Christianity is nomadic. It is the reef upon which the ships of idolatrous philosophies are wrecked. The effect of this preaching, Yoder insists, is an intellectual pluralism and relativism, for *pluralism/relativism is a confusing world, but it is not an alien one. It is the child of the Hebrew and Christian intervention in cultural history. It is the spinoff from missionary mobility, from the love of the enemy, from the relativizing of political sovereignty, from a dialogical vision of the church, from a charismatic vision of the many members of the body, from the disavowal of empire and theocracy. It lays before us the challenge of convincing interlocutors who are not our dependents, of affirming a particular witness to be good news without being interested in showing that other people are bad.*¹⁵

The Christian witness, like the Word about which it testifies, is active and affirming. Conflict with and reaction to "other views" does not constitute the first move or have priority.¹⁶ The first move in the Christian witness is not our move at all. Rather, God comes and reveals himself to us as love. Our response to God's love constitutes the second move. The second move is not exclusively or primarily a matter of intellectual assent but an obedience expressed in love for one's neighbor. This is the essentially active and affirming nature of the Word and of the preaching of Christian witness. Only such a Word and such a witness can embody an affirmation of power that is non-violent.

This non-violent affirmation precedes the violence of both rhetoric and dialectics, as well as the violence embodied in the dichotomy between rhetoric and dialectics. That is, the Christian witness refuses to impose its will on others, either dialectically or rhetorically (I Cor. 1:17, 2:13), for this is the way God treats us.¹⁷ This feature of the Christian witness prevents the church-related college from taking the postliberal university as an acceptable model.

MacIntyre himself catches sight of part of the problem when he ceases to play the role of the philosopher. He claims "this divorce between rhetorical effectiveness and rational argumentation is deeply at odds with the thirteenth-century Dominican ideal, especially as articulated by Aquinas, in which the homily was to be the end-product of an education in philosophy and theology."¹⁸ The divorce also runs counter to the self-understanding and goals of many of those who founded our church-related colleges, not for training scholars capable of engaging successfully in dialectical warfare, but for preparing those capable of being witnesses ($\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\epsilon\varsigma$) of Jesus.

The affirmative message of Christian preaching does respond to "other views," but only as a third moment in the Christian witness. These other positions are not merely "unjustified," or "an expression of (bad) power," but "idolatrous." The category of idolatry indicates that the problem is not so much intellectual confusion or dullness, but our disordered loves. These disordered loves can keep us from confronting God as a person, rather than as an idea, and they bar us from full participation in the City of God. Preaching introduces disordered lovers to the God who is love. The church-related college, taking its guide from the preaching of the church, seeks to educate our desires and set them in order.

III. Conclusion

Jerry, the student to whom I referred above, understood Christianity as a set of beliefs that have an absolute status. He thought that he had lost his faith when he exchanged one set of absolute ideas for another set of equally absolute ideas. The first set of ideas had been instilled in his mind rhetorically; the second set imparted dialectically. He thought that "Reason" stood outside of all power and could save him from "illusion."

Neither the liberal or the postliberal university have the resources to respond to Jerry's loss of faith, for they are rooted in a dialectically managed conflict of ideas. That is, postmodernism shows us that dialectics, rhetoric, and the opposition between them all assume a form of violence. By

institutionalizing these forms of discourse, both the liberal and postliberal universities ultimately underwrite an unavoidable violence.

The God worshiped by Christians is a God of love and peace. Thus, the church-related college must institutionally embody an ontology of non-violence both in what it says and in its mode of speaking. The message proclaimed by Christians, therefore, takes the form of preaching. Preaching calls for a transformation of the entire person. The truths of Christianity are not known cheaply or without personal risk. The church-related college, if it is to train preachers, must educate not the minds of students to be scholars, but the loves and desires of persons to be a preacher.

The Christian witness will not always convince modernist students like Jerry. It will not overwhelm the postmodernists. This is the risk it takes in affirming non-violence. In a postmodern era, it is this affirmation that provides the church-related college with its most valuable resource.

NOTES

1. *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Notre Dame, 1990) 168.
2. MacIntyre says "Cleghorn was rightly preferred to Hume for the chair in moral philosophy at Edinburgh" (TRV, 224).
3. TRV, 230-1.
4. TRV, 234.
5. This is MacIntyre's position in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, 1988). See Martha Nussbaum's review of MacIntyre's position in "Recoiling from Reason," *New York Review of Books* (7 December 1989)36-41.
6. Blackwell, 1993.
7. MacIntyre is less dialectical, I think, in both *After Virtue* and in *Three Rival Versions*.
8. MacIntyre does insist on the importance of various practices for an intellectual tradition. Nevertheless, he fails to show how Christian theology emerges out of the life and the practices of the Church.
9. Milbank, 337.
10. Milbank, 335.
11. Milbank, 334.
12. Phillips Brooks, *The Joy of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989) 27. This means that books, e-texts, the world wide web, or video courses are less than adequate for the nature of Christian truth.
13. Milbank, 328.
14. Milbank, 121.
15. Yoder, "But We Do See Jesus," *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, 1984) 54.
16. Yoder, 60.
17. My concern here is motivated in part by Nietzsche, *Toward a Genealogy of of Morals*, Essay I, X. See also Paul Ricoeur, "Negativity and Primary Affirmation," *History and Truth* (Northwestern University Press, 1965) 305-328.
18. See Pascal's *Pensées* for the development of this theme.
19. TRV, 169. While I do not want to identify the homily with the various form that preaching may take, it is perhaps an ideal that can orient us.

A RESPONSE TO GREGORY CLARK
A God of Peace and Love? - -
Reflections From a Biblical Scholar
Karla G. Bohmbach

As a member of this journal's editorial board, one of my duties is to read and evaluate articles submitted for publication as they are sent my way by the editor, Tom Christenson. When I read Gregory Clark's article, I thought definitely that we should publish it. My main comment to Tom was that it would be greatly desirable to solicit respondents who might interrogate further the practicality of Clark's proposal for church-related colleges. In the back of my mind, as I made that comment to Tom, I thought of how much I was looking forward to reading such responses when the issue came out. Tom had other ideas. He requested a response from me. What has resulted is actually some questions, derived mainly from my work as a scholar of biblical studies. I hope such questions prompt further comment — and further questions! — from readers.

Gregory Clark affirms the stance taken by John Milbank — that all philosophies and institutions, whether ancient, modern, or postmodern, are built on an ontology of violence. In this way a critique is made of Alasdair MacIntyre's position concerning the postmodern liberal university, which, for MacIntyre, would be a place of constrained agreement (and so, presumably, non-violent). The problem for Clark, who is following Milbank here, is that such a university, insofar as it engaged with other “institutionalized versions of moral enquiry” would remain within an ontology of violence. For these engagements would be managed dialectically, and dialectics can never lead to harmony but, at most, only a sort of managed conflict which, in the end, is still violent.

Instead of an ontology of violence, Clark desires an ontology of peace. He argues that such an ontology of peace is to be found in the person of Jesus, the person who preeminently reveals “the God who is love and peace.” As a biblical scholar, my reaction is to interrogate the ways in which Jesus did, and did not, reveal such a God.

Jesus lived in a violent world. And far from shying away from that world and its violence, he seems to have deliberately opened himself up to it. Although his message was greeted frequently with suspicion, skepticism, and

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vilification, he did not back down or retreat from it, even when, as one account has it, the people of his own hometown attempted to kill him (Luke 4: 14 - 30). Eventually he set his face toward Jerusalem, even though he knew the sharp opposition facing him there from the religious authorities. And, once in Jerusalem, he engaged in an act that most see as the precipitating event of his final suffering: the overturning of the moneychangers' tables in the Temple itself. Although it may not have been as physically violent as has been depicted in such movies as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the act at least had overtones of violence. Not only, then, does Jesus receive violence onto himself, here, at least, he actually imposes it on others. Jesus' violence begets further violence, now enacted against him, as he is arrested, tried, scourged, and crucified — a sequence of events which, by all accounts, was horrifically violent.

Not only was violence a part of Jesus' life, he also warned his followers that such would be their fate:

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household” (Matt. 10: 34-36; cf. Luke 12: 51-53).

If, indeed, the God who is found in Jesus is a God of love and peace, it seems that the love and peace comes about in and through the acceptance of violence — and the suffering that often accompanies such violence. The events of the Passions, which lie at the very center of Jesus' life and mission, are an overwhelming witness to Jesus' ready acceptance of, and patient bearing of, the violence being inflicted upon him. Followers of Jesus forget this at their own peril, for the message to them, too, is that if love and peace will be constitutive of their lives, such will not occur unaccompanied by, or exclusive of, violence.

If we do as Gregory Clark urges us to do, and proclaim Jesus on our campuses, what would that look like? In particular, what would it mean if we took to heart the Jesus who made himself vulnerable to the violence of his world? We, too, live in a violent world. Dare we look unblinkingly

into the face of such violence, take it upon ourselves, and even, if called upon to do so, bear up and suffer in some way because of it? As staff, administrators, and teachers on

college campuses related to the church, how might our tasks be affected, even altered, by a serious living out of the words.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED: MAYBE PLATO WAS RIGHT

Richard Yivisaker

A popular view of Plato holds that his world view has had a great and largely detrimental influence while being transparently false. I have not been immune to this oddly dismissive attitude. It is with no little surprise, in fact, that I have gradually come to see that Plato may have been right. About everything? No. About some important things, however, clearly yes. I want to fix on one point in particular, a point which reverberates in a special way for those who inhabit the academic world. But first a brief consideration of some other points where Plato had an insight that merits preserving.

PRELIMINARY EXAMPLES

(1) Communities Are Not Necessarily Better Off By Becoming More Diverse.

We do not have to accept the vision of social differentiation and hierarchy idealized in the *Republic* to see the truth in Plato's view that a good society requires unity in diversity. Diversity may be necessary, but it is not sufficient. It contains the seeds of discord and disintegration along with the potential for enriched life, as homogeneity brings unity while threatening loss of vitality and decay. Everything depends on the wedding of diversity to some unity of purpose. We may accept Charles Taylor's notion that a "presumption" of value is owed to any deeply rooted culture, but this presumption has to be tested in an encounter of cultures whose outcome is uncertain.¹ This requires a commitment to such encounter on the part of the community, and this commitment is the unity of purpose which constitutes the community. If we were to turn our attention to the call for increased diversity at colleges of the church, creating the necessary unity in diversity would be a major task. It is not a matter of simple addition.

(2) If Politics Is To Be More Than A Struggle For

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Power By Competing Interests, It Has To Be Assumed That There Is A Moral Basis For Politics Which Transcends Special Interests.

Indeed, even the rightful pursuit of power on behalf of a particular interest assumes this. In our commitment to democratic politics we may reject some or all of the extreme measures to which Plato is led by this assumption. But the challenge of constructing a democratic process consistent with it is great. This may not mean, as it did for Plato, that the challenge is unmeetable. But the reduction of democracy to a naked or thinly disguised struggle for power parades itself daily.² Plato knew a difficult problem when he saw one.

(3) The Much-Derided Dualism of Body And Soul Contains A Measure Of Truth.

Even if we take the radical dualism in *Phaedo* at face value, there is more to be said for it than fashionable criticism allows. We want to say, of course, that the very idea of disembodied existence is both unappealing and barely conceivable (if conceivable at all). But this does not remove the problems of embodied life which rightly concerned Plato.

Of particular interest is his worry about the impact of embodiment on our cognitive life. For embodied creatures awareness of the world is mediated by organs which register and transmit sensory data. This leads to diverse points of view, depending on species nature, on individual physiology and psychology, on space-time location, and on cultural factors carried by language. The hope of liberating rational consciousness from such dependence may strike us as fanciful if not preposterous. As may the idea that we can aspire to a form of consciousness which is without any point of view and thus god-like. But bridging differences in point of view is a cognitive (and moral) imperative for us. So also, then, is discovering a process which in some way makes this possible. Plato saw all of this with great clarity. The point here is related to the earlier ones about morality

and politics and unity in diversity, and it brings us to the idea that I have come to see as Plato's deepest.

TOWARD A COMMUNITY OF DISCOURSE

Another surprise for me over the years has been discovering the strength of the penchant for doctrinaire pronouncement among academic people. Our fondness for mere opinion, in other words. Deconstructionists and Foucaultians will smile knowingly at my belated loss of innocence. But we needn't be deterred by their deflation of rational discourse as an illusion masking some will to power or fear of the free play of interpretation. Either they must defend their deflationary strategy incoherently (with an appeal to reasoned argument) or they offer us no reason to accept it. So we are free to reconsider Plato's commitment to the dynamics of reason.

The distinction between knowledge and opinion is central to the Republic. It was Plato's way of repudiating the reduction of knowledge to power or to groundless interpretation. Without this distinction the search for solid moral judgment is meaningless and the good life therefore impossible. Surely Plato was right about this. If personal or collective opinion is the last word, the true and the good are defined simply by our assent and thus become dispensable notions, except as tools of persuasion which work only until they are unmasked.

On the other hand, Plato's use of this distinction is problematic. Taking it as a given epistemically, he makes it call for a parallel and equally sharp distinction between the objects of knowledge and opinion: they cannot be distinct purchases on reality unless they are about different realities. Epistemology thus entails metaphysics. In this way the original distinction produces a fundamental divide between stable, mind-transcending models or exemplars (the Forms) and the space-time particulars which are their images.

We are rightly suspicious of the claim that knowledge and opinion cannot be about the same objects, even if we agree that epistemically there is a qualitative difference between them. But Plato's mistake is not the blatant one it is often taken to be. Crucial marks of knowledge cannot be detached from metaphysical considerations. For example, legitimate claims to know must be supported by good reasons, by "reasoned discourse" or "a reasoned account of reality" which can "survive all refutations," as Socrates puts it in Republic VII. If we grant this, we cannot avoid the question: About what sort of reality is it possible to have "reasoned discourse"? Which puts us firmly on the path of

metaphysics. So Plato's attempt to harvest metaphysical hay from the field of common-sense epistemology has something to be said for it.

More important, however, is the way questions about the links between knowledge, reasoned discourse, and reality are embedded for Plato in questions about the good community. Epistemology and metaphysics are inseparable from ethics. Even if we are skeptical about his metaphysical enterprise and suspicious of the social and ontological hierarchies to which it leads, we do well to ponder his insistence on the link between reasoned discourse and community. For the larger society his vision of a community built on reasoned discourse may be utopian; for an academic community it should not be. It matters - especially in such a community - how the views we hold are supported and defended. Being right is not enough: better to be wrong with good reason than right with bad (or no) reasons. So I have slowly learned. This may seem obvious, too obvious to have to be learned. But in my experience tough-mindedness about the pedigree of your own beliefs, especially the ones you hold dear, is not easy to come by.³

TWO CASES

Possible examples of the difficulty are legion. I choose two which are of particular interest to me. In each case the choice reflects my confidence both about an important truth and about the negligence of a particular defense of it.

(1) **The Death Penalty Is Wrong And Should Be Abolished.**

I have little doubt about the truth of this, though the tide in our country is running the other way. However, I have even less doubt about bad defenses of this truth. I pick one such defense, though a variety is ready to hand; and I pick it because it is close to home.

The E.L.C.A. is in the practice of issuing social statements on major public issues. These statements become the basis for continued discussion in the church and for public policy advocacy. A minimal requirement is that the positions they adopt be defended carefully and honestly, that no shortcuts be taken to make them appear self-evident. An egregious failure to meet this requirement is provided by the church's 1991 statement on the death penalty.⁴ Anyone who has really thought about this issue knows that the strongest case for retaining the death penalty is based on the demand for just retribution. It presses such questions as these: What

penalty "fits" or is "deserved by" the uniquely heinous crime of first degree murder? What punishment adequately upholds the community's consensus about the depth of the wrong committed by a brutal taking of innocent life? This case for the death penalty needs to be taken seriously by any convincing case against it: Can the demand for just retribution be met without recourse to the death penalty? If so, how? Is that demand itself misguided? If so, why?

There is more than one way of minimizing this challenge. A common one is to equate just retribution with vengeance. For the E.L.C.A.'s social statement, however, the challenge hardly exists. Though it repeatedly cites justice as a goal of the church's social action, the statement shows scant understanding of distinctions which are crucial to understanding this goal. In the brief section on "Doing Justice,"⁵ we find the following:

Violent crime is, in part, a reminder of human failure to ensure justice for all members of society. People often respond to violent crime as though it were exclusively a matter of the criminal's individual failure. The death penalty exacts and symbolizes the ultimate personal retribution.

Yet, capital punishment makes no provable impact on the breeding grounds of violent crime. Executions harm society by mirroring and reinforcing existing injustice. The death penalty distracts us from our work toward a just society. . . It perpetuates cycles of violence.

The statement then calls for "an assault on the root causes of violent crime" and asserts without argument that problems of fairness in the administration of the death penalty are insurmountable. Finally, we are told that

The practice of the death penalty undermines any possible moral message we might want to 'send.' It is not fair and fails to make society better or safer. The message conveyed by an execution . . . is one of brutality and violence.⁶

In a few lines the demand for just retribution is first slighted, then confused with different concerns, and finally obliterated. It is hard to imagine less regard for reasoned discourse. The presupposition of the argument, if there is an argument, is that the primary agent of crime is society, the alleged criminal being more a victim than a perpetrator of injustice. This presupposition is not self-evident; it needs to be argued. And it needs to be argued case by case-unless we

fall back on a social determinism which removes all responsibility and with it any role for the notions of justice and injustice. This, too, would need to be argued.

(2) We Must Extend The Boundaries Of Moral Concern Beyond Humanity To Encompass All Of The Natural World.

I find this imperative as compelling as the one about the death penalty. It certainly is unproblematic within a theocentric ethic: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." But how make it compelling to resistant non-theists?

Consider a recent attempt in this direction: Larry Rasmussen's Earth Community Earth Ethics.⁷ Though there is much to admire in Rasmussen's book, it provides another example of the failure to offer compelling reasons for a strongly held position. We may agree with Rasmussen's judgment that a way of life tied to a consumption-driven, globally expanding market economy is unsustainable and that its threat to ecological well-being is growing exponentially, and agree as well that the urgency of the situation calls for a paradigm shift in our moral thinking. But how are we to ground the necessary shift? Showing its utility is one thing; grounding it is something else. Rasmussen attempts to ground it in two ways. One is by expanding the realm of sentient life, life capable of experiencing pain; the other, as his title suggests, is by enlarging our view of community. Each fails even moderately stringent tests of rationality. The unintended result is to turn Rasmussen's brief for a non-homocentric ethic on its head.

There is no phrase more often repeated in his book than "earth's distress." The less dramatic variants include "creation's pain," "the cry of the earth," "nature's suffering." Sometimes God is the one who is said to suffer as a result of nature's degradation. More typically, however, "earth," "nature," or "creation" itself is viewed as the subject of suffering. This way of speaking serves to make all of creation the focus of moral regard and to awaken compassion for it. But what is the basis for adopting such language? Rasmussen offers only constant use of the language, intimating that refusal to adopt it is a sign of homocentric arrogance. Emphatic reassertion, in other words, rather than argument. It would indeed be arrogance to deny suffering to nature where observable behavior displays it. But where there is no such behavior, the attribution of suffering becomes moralizing sentimentality.

Rasmussen's other attempt to ground a radical revision of our moral framework fails similarly: the natural world is characterized in a way which encourages the revision, but little rationale is offered for it beyond the characterization itself. This time the language is that of "cosmic community," "earth community," "the community of life," "creation as a genuine community," "nature as both the aboriginal and comprehensive community." Such phrases are used again and again as the basis for a "comprehensive communitarian ethic."⁸

The thinness of Rasmussen's argument is revealed as soon as we ask how "community" is to be understood. The difficulty he faces is that this concept must have moral import and yet be comprehensively applicable. The latter requirement is satisfied by explicating "community" in broad relational terms. We hear about the "internal relatedness and interdependence of creation," the "interconnectedness . . . among all things," and the "intricate togetherness of things." Talking this way is convincing as long as we understand it in causal terms. It is no accident that Rasmussen appeals to the discoveries of natural science to ground his communitarian view of nature. But causal interdependence, simply as such, lacks moral import. Rasmussen unwittingly exposes the crucial non-sequitur: "The goodness of life together and the reciprocity learned in genuine community create moral agency and responsibility."⁹ A community in which reciprocity is learned is indeed a moral community; but the interdependence which holds it together is more than causal, a kind of interdependence we have been given no reason to apply to the cosmos.

Aldo Leopold fell into the same error in his classic expression of this communitarian vision.

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate . . . The land ethic simply enlarges the boundary of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.¹⁰

Ethics requires the context of community and community requires an interdependence of cooperating members. But the land (in Leopold's sense) is not such a community. The mutuality essential to cooperation and hence to moral community is absent.

Rasmussen and Leopold take a concept whose moral pregnancy derives from a human context and extend it beyond that context without supporting evidence. Equivocating on the word "community," they end up attacking a homocentric bias in ethics with a conceptual move which is itself deeply homocentric. Ironically, reconceiving the natural world in our image has become the basis for reconceiving ourselves in nature's image.¹¹ The result is an expanded moral vision supported by no good reason. Little more than mere opinion, Plato would have said. And he would have been right.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES

Why should we care about having good reasons for our beliefs?¹² Well, the likelihood of having true beliefs is enhanced by good reasons. That is, good reasons make it more likely that my beliefs reflect the way things really are and not merely the way I want them to be. Suppose, however, that we reject the very idea of "the way things really are"; or we say that what matters about a view of the cosmos is not whether it is objectively true but whether it supports a preferred moral vision, or that moral visions do not need grounding in the way things really are.

Plato, of course, would demur on all of these suppositions. But assume that there is something to be said for them. Even then Plato would continue to defend the demand for good reasons since reason is linked to the possibility of a community of discourse. Disdain good reasons and you risk losing this possibility.¹³ Reason fosters such a community because it is by nature dialectical. Provoking us to discover incoherence in our beliefs, it leads us to uncover the assumptions on which they rest and to subject these assumptions to critical scrutiny. In this way it pulls us toward the vision of a ground which can compel the assent of all who reach it and thus bind us together. But this movement has to be governed by the mutuality it seeks; hidden contradictions and underlying assumptions do not yield readily to a solitary mind. The dialectic of reason is of necessity dialogical.

Here, then, is the fundamental insight: Offering reasons to support our beliefs and caring about the best possible reasons is a way of exposing ourselves to others and reaching out to them in the name of a community of discourse, a way of inviting them to join us in building this community. Refusing to provide reasons or to care about them is a rejection of community, an attempt to get others to accept our word as the last word. It is the will to power

at work.

Each of the ideas for which I earlier claimed Platonic ancestry points to this final one. For me its essential rightness has taken a long time to sink in. Teaching for many years is what made it possible. Largely by happenstance, I stumbled into a way of teaching which involved taking positions in class - real positions, positions to which I was seriously if provisionally committed - and urging students to come at them with their probing criticism. My initial motivation was to get them thinking by making myself vulnerable in this way. But what I discovered was a dialectic in which, on the good days, we pushed each other into thinking in new ways and doing this together for the sake of deeper understanding. I rediscovered Plato.

How can there be academic community without something like this as the controlling ethos, in the conversations not only of faculty with students but among students themselves and even - the biggest challenge - within the faculty? How (even more) can it fail to be the controlling ethos at a college of the church, with its confession of faith in the creative Word and trust in a Holy Spirit moving among us? Here, at least, Athens and Jerusalem should meet.

NOTES

¹ Charles Taylor et. al., Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994) 63-73.

² Jesse Helms' use of the power of his chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to prevent both committee and floor debate on William Weld's nomination to be Ambassador to Mexico is a recent example of a naked exercise of power at the expense of the democratic process. The fate of the McCain-Feingold bill on campaign finance reform is another, though in that case the power struggle was at least thinly disguised.

³ A likely rejoinder here would say, "Surely there are views which can only be held with little or no reason." Perhaps. But we ought to be suspicious of any particular claim to this effect if it is made with no investigation of possible reasons. That there are no possible reasons is itself a claim

which needs argument and thus reasons.

⁴ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "A Social Statement on: The Death Penalty" (September 1991).

⁵ Ibid, 3.

⁶ Ibid, 4. Emphasis added.

⁷ Larry L. Rasmussen, Earth Community Earth Ethics (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

⁸ This theme appears throughout the book, but it is especially prominent in the concluding part, "Earth Action," 319 ff.

⁹ Ibid, 313. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1949), 203-204.

¹¹ It may be that homocentrism is inescapable here, that we need to find a way through it to a recognition of worth in the natural world which is independent of our interests. Rasmussen occasionally suggests a possibility of this sort without pursuing it: recognition of the ways in which we are implicated in nature's web of causal interdependence has the power to awaken gratitude for the gifts we receive from it. Gratitude, of course, is homocentric: it is gratitude for a benefit to us. But gratitude seems also to acknowledge the intrinsic worth of the source of the benefit: we can hardly be grateful if we view the source as having merely instrumental value relative to our interests. Whether gratitude must always be felt toward a person is a further question. An intriguing one which bears on the possibility of having an environmental ethic which can be non-theocentric as well as theocentric.

¹² Perhaps there are beliefs which are matters of "faith" and not of reason (i.e. of any conceivable kind of reason). But beliefs designed to provide a non-theocentric foundation for expanding the boundaries of moral regard are not promising candidates.

¹³ Whether Plato would say further, following Rousseau in The Social Contract, that without a community of discourse no reason is possible, is unclear to me.

RESPONSES:

“The Lutheran Liberal Arts College and Care for the Earth,” by H. Paul Santmire, in *Intersections* (June 1997)

Arthur A. Preisinger

I found most of H. Paul Santmire's article, “The Lutheran Liberal Arts College and Care for the Earth,” commendable and thought-provoking. The critique of the “back-to-nature” cult, the call for a holistic environmental ethos in the face of crass materialism and “sociopathic individualism,” the suggestion of creating a cosmic liturgical praxis - all provide considerable food for thought and, indeed, action. Nevertheless, I take issue with Santmire on several counts relative to the section on classical Lutheran social ethics.

Santmire admits that much of White's argument “is historically justified, *insofar as one can allow that religious faith can exercise in fact a significant historical causality.*” He goes on at some length to defend the ecological tradition in Western theology - as if Lutheran theology were something wholly apart from Western theology! Santmire encourages contemplation of the riches in the vaults of Western theology, advising us not to “conclude that all historic Christianity has to offer is anthropocentrism and the domination of nature.” He encourages such contemplation of the riches of Lutheran vaults, too. But what are these riches? Only one, as far as I can see: “At its best, the Lutheran tradition has sent forth forgiven sinners to be good citizens and witnesses to the kingdom of God that has arrived in Jesus Christ.” That is all the Lutheran tradition has to offer? He has damned it with faint praise. Why the bum rap for Lutherans?

What is wrong here, in my opinion, is a simplistic delineation of the two kingdoms ethic. Granted, the two kingdoms doctrine has been used by German theologians of this century to justify acquiescence to the Nazi regime. Did the regime itself use the “two kingdoms” to justify its actions? There is precious little evidence for that. If the two kingdoms really was one of the sources of Nazi mischief, it could only be so insofar as one can allow that religious faith can exercise in fact a significant historical causality. As a

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matter of fact, both A confessional and liberal German theologians of the nineteenth century used a *distorted and misinterpreted* two kingdoms doctrine to separate ethics from the gospel.

Luther never wrote a systematic treatise on the doctrine of the two kingdoms. (The term itself, by the way, became common as late as the 1930's.) He used diverse terminology to come to grips with the ethical problems of the Christian of his day. One needs to examine the two kinds of dualities (antithetical and complementary) by which he explicates the doctrine. Luther does make a distinction between what he sometimes calls the “left hand” and the “right hand” of God. But these are elements of the “complementary duality,” i.e., what Ulrich Duchrow calls the two governances of God. True, the right distinction must be made between the two governances; they must not be confused. On the other hand, they must not be separated. The temporal (Kingdom of creation?) and spiritual (Kingdom of redemption?) governances are not spheres that can be separated, but dimensions to be distinguished. I will not go into the complexities here. I suggest a reading of Karl Hertz, ed., *Two Kingdoms and One World: A Source book in Christian Ethics*; Ulrich Duchrow, *Two Kingdoms - The Use and Misuse of a Lutheran Theological Concept*; and Tom Strieter's excellent Th.D. dissertation, “Contemporary Two Kingdoms and Governances Thinking to Today's World.”

If, in fact, the two kingdoms doctrine was the reason for all those German Lutherans jumping on the Nazi bandwagon, how does Santmire explain all those German Roman Catholics, *who had no such doctrine*, jumping on the same bandwagon?

I do not know what Santmire means by “classical Lutheran teaching.” Sixteenth century (Luther)? Seventeenth century? What? If he puts the onus of intersection “only in the person of the individual believer. . .” on Luther, I think he is dead wrong. One should read, for example, Luther's commentary of Psalm 82, or, “On Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed.”

Santmire argues that the two kingdoms is admirable for the theology of God's grace, but it "leaves much to be desired as an affirmation and defense of the theology of God's justice." Again, I contend it is not the two kingdoms doctrine as such that is to be faulted, but its abuse and misappropriation. For a very insightful discussion of the evolution of Luther's views on law and justice, I suggest F. Edward Cranz, *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law, and Society*, vol. XIX of the Harvard Theological Series, issued as an extra number of the Harvard Theological Review (1964).

It is ironic that Santmire brings up South Africa. The South African Council of Churches used the two kingdoms (correctly interpreted) in its fight against apartheid. I had discussed this very thing with Wolfram Kistner when he was head of the Theological Division of the Council. And Eberhard Bethge had lectured in South Africa on the two kingdoms, seeing it as a theological tool in the struggle.

It is a real stretch to link the two kingdoms doctrine with the alleged non-concern of church leaders for the "groaning of the earth and its masses in this era of global environmental

crisis." I doubt if church leaders know much, or care much, about the two kingdoms. The issue of whether or not to "hold hands with the Episcopalians," it seems to me, has been driven by church politics rather than by theology. If theology were the issue, the agreement with the Presbyterians, the Reformed Church and the UCC would not so easily have glided through the ELCA Assembly in August.

Fundamental issues of social justice are being obscured in our time by many "circles" besides Lutherans. How do we know that "toxic waste dumps. . ." do not "appear" to be a matter of concern for "many" Lutherans today? Who are these "many Lutheran circles"? This is simply too general and too emotive to be taken seriously.

If we are to look for skeletons in our closet, let us search for real bones, not plastic ones. As far as I am concerned, the skeletons are not so much Luther as a departure from Luther. As Bill Lazareth has written, "There is nothing so sick about Lutheran ethics that a strong dose of Luther cannot cure it."

A RESPONSE TO PAUL SANTMIRE

Don Braxton

When asked if Lutheran theology and ethics has anything distinctive about it, my usual response - general but accurate - is that Lutheran thinking is above all else governed by a dialectical vision. Reaching back to Paul and Augustine, Luther's thought is thoroughly dialectical. Polarities such as Law and Gospel, Two Kingdoms, and Freedom and Bondage, are the driving dynamic force behind Luther's powerful Reformation theology. Paul Santmire's address to Capital University delivered on November 14, 1997, clearly embodies that tradition both in form and in content. Because they seem so well rooted in the normative traditions of our Lutheran liberal arts heritage, his suggestions offer the prospect of authentic guidance for the Lutheran college serious about its past - and its future.

Santmire's vision for the Lutheran liberal arts college in an environmental age is clearly dialectical. Formally, Santmire articulates three mandates, each of which is expounded in

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terms of its strengths and weaknesses, or as Santmire puts it, "skeletons in our closets and riches in our own vaults." This formal mode of presentation seems to me very important, for it articulates a basic insight of Lutheran thought on institutional structures. Namely, those strengths which enable an institution to thrive can often lead to the same institutions' decay, either through complacency and even hubris, or through blindness. While Lutheran liberal arts colleges need to draw upon their historical strengths, yet they also need to evolve as institutions to respond to the prospects and dangers of a dynamic world. In effect, they need to identify their social functions historically and serve those same functions today, yet do so under quite different societal conditions. In other words, they must do things differently in order to continue to do what they have always done.

On the content level, Santmire identifies three themes. The first theme is responsibility for spiritual particularity. Addressing a theme Santmire is uniquely qualified to assess, he calls for an honest owning up to the *ambiguity* of the Christian tradition toward the environment. Clearly, there

are skeletons in the closet of the Christian tradition on this account. But there are also profound resources both historically and in the prolific, contemporary field of ecotheology and ethics. Likewise I think Santmire is on target when he warns against a premature flight to alternative religious traditions because of a putative greater sensitivity to the environment. I would point out that the historical record of the actual behaviors of these traditions is rarely critically assessed. At the very least, it must be emphasized that theoretical environmental sensitivity in either the Christian or the non-Christian traditions is no guarantee of ecologically responsible behavior in practice.

The theme of ambiguity is carried over to comments on the distinctively Lutheran tradition of Two Kingdoms. Here again, I think Santmire is fundamentally on target. Yet while he is quite specific about the deficits of typical Lutheran social ethics, he is strangely mute on what the strengths might be. At issue, I think, is whether one views Luther's ethics as dualistic or dialectical. On the one hand, classical Lutheran ethics has been, and often still can be, very quietistic. On matters of social justice, Lutherans often regard the church as unqualified to enter into worldly political and social struggles. At the very most, it has sought to convert the individual conscience for higher standards of behavior in their secular offices. In this day and age, where we recognize the power of social structures to shape and mold character and individual behavior, such a stance is clearly inadequate. But, on the other hand, Lutheran ethics at its best is dialectical, recognizing the interpenetration of church and world, Law and Gospel, eschatological Kingdom and present day realities. History, as in St. Augustine, for example, can be regarded as salvation history, as the dynamic struggle for the birthing forth in bits and pieces of a redeemed world. While Lutherans will always be clear that the world is not the Kingdom of God - the Lutheran emphasis on sin will preclude that - yet they may also look for and cooperate with the signs of the in-breaking of God's glorious New Age, the New Heavens and the New Earth. Such a vision was clearly at the root of the Lutheran Hegel, or the Lutheran theologian Ritschl. Bonhoeffer and Reinhold Niebuhr certainly fit in this camp, as does the contemporary Lutheran ecotheologian Larry Rasmussen. At its best, the dialectical patterns of Lutheran social ethics grants us a sensitivity - hopeful yet realistic - to the relative approximations of ecological and social justice possible in our various historical moments. It seems to me that Santmire could have done more to point out these qualities.

The other two mandates of responsible social criticism and

the promotion of a responsible environmental ethos can be taken together. Clearly, the objective of the liberal arts tradition is to promote liberal thinkers, liberal in the classical sense of liberated from excessive parochialism. The question only remains, to what extent are Lutheran liberal arts colleges still doing this. Two remarks: First, my experience of many Lutheran colleges and universities is that their liberal arts dimensions have been progressively on the retreat in favor of more marketable vocational training in the areas of business, education, computer science, and the like. It is a matter of considerable debate as to what degree our graduates have managed to imbibe some of the liberal arts ethos, even as they have concentrated on their vocational choices. At least, that is often the rationale one hears for this institutional drift. Second, a brief glance at the promotional materials of our Lutheran colleges and universities will raise doubts as to whether Lutheran higher education promises to lead students deeper into the complexities of modern, urban life, as Santmire calls for. Indeed, I often have the impression that students and their families select private liberal arts colleges because they promise a safe and sheltered learning experience, not one of exposure. Are the products of such educational experiences prepared to enter our complex and wounded world equipped with the critical resources of a liberally educated individual?

Finally, in my opinion, if there is an issue toward which contemporary liberal arts education ought to gravitate, it is environmental responsibility and responsible social criticism of ecologically unsustainable practices. Here, I believe Santmire places his finger on exactly the three dimensions of institutional reform required of contemporary institutions, namely, curricular reform, a pedagogy directed toward creative social imagination, and the practices of reverence and respect before life and its mysteries. Because ecology is the science sine qua non of interrelationships, it constitutes the best available option for a capstone integration experience. Debates have been circulating on the inclusion of an environmental studies component in our core curriculum here at Capital, yet without much success to date. As the world, its populations, civilizations, and ecosystems become increasingly interdependent, I believe that some form of environmental studies component in every educational experience will be an inevitability. A step in that direction would be in keeping with the creative, liberal thinking of our heritage, a sign that our imaginations are already reaching into the future, anticipating an age of greater ecological sanity. Until that time, liberal arts colleges can practice creative workshops known as "liturgies" where a new reality is pronounced, attended to, and dramatized into reality. Worship is a form of resistance

to the compulsions of instrumentalism and the false necessities in our age. Worship creates a space in which human potential can be unleashed, where creative imagination can be exercised, and where a fortitude of will can be developed to enter the world, in Santmire's phrase, daring to be "irrelevant" to its insanity and thereby offering an alternative that may promise a brighter future.

Liberal arts colleges have a tough road ahead. In the face of all these suggestions, many administrators and professors will be quick to point out that competition is stiff and that institutions must strike compromises. Could an institution like Capital really survive if it sought to embody what has been outlined in Santmire's article and my response?

Indeed, in my own dialectical view, with its bent toward

REVIEW

Buford, Thomas O.

In Search of a Calling: The College's Role in Shaping Identity.

Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995

Karla G. Bohmbach

The term "calling" has long been a favorite among Lutheran educators. And though its precise meaning invites debate - - indeed, perhaps partly because of that very fact - - it continues to be utilized even today in efforts to formulate and refine what it means to be a Lutheran college or university. In such ongoing efforts Thomas O. Buford's In Search of a Calling: The College's Role in Shaping Identity would seem to be a promising participant, not least because it makes use of the term "calling" in its title. What, more precisely, does this book offer towards our thinking about tasks, challenges, and promises facing Lutheran colleges and universities as they move into the twenty-first century?

Like others who have also been writing about higher education (e.g., Mark Schwehn, Page Smith, Bruce Wilshire), the author asserts that colleges and universities are in trouble. What sets Buford's work apart, though, is both his perspective as a philosopher and his assessment that the fundamental cause of this trouble is a crisis of meaning among students.

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realism, I am willing to go some distance in this conversation. And yet, realism cuts two ways. Is it realistic to believe that we can continue to function in a business-as-usual mode in the face of looming ecocrisis? Is it realistic to believe that liberal arts colleges can shove their liberal arts orientations to the periphery and still be liberal arts colleges with something distinctive to offer the educational world? Is it realistic to believe that we can equip students for responsible citizenship by training them to be articulate members of a global economy whose vision of a good society is an acre of suburban bliss, plenty of horsepower in the driveway, and recreational trips to Martha's Vineyard, Mt. Rushmore, or Club Med? So will the real realism please stand up? Where do you stand?

One of the first tasks Buford sets for himself is determining the causes of this meaning-crisis; his strategy is to examine discussion. In the process, Buford also more specifically identifies and explicates what he sees as two aspects of the historical background in, through and against which American higher education has developed. Here the concept of "calling" is central, giving shape and focus to the calling. One involves the spiritual, religious, or moral identity of a person (all three terms are variously used). It refers, fundamentally, to that which God has ordained one to do; its roots are in the Hebrew Bible; and it is strongly communitarian. The second has to do with the so-called practical identity of a person. This aspect is much more individualistic; its roots are in the Renaissance; and it centers on the humanists' assertion that individuals have the right and ability to determine their own lives, to discern their particular gifts, talents, and interests and then choose a life and career based on them.

For Buford, both aspects of calling are necessary in order to achieve full personhood. The crisis facing students is that these two are deemed irreconcilable and so have been largely split asunder by the educational system. Moreover, the

practical aspect - - under the influence of our technological society - - has been given priority, with the concomitant neglect of the moral or theological one. Buford seeks both to reconnect and balance the two sides.

In order to do so, Buford revisits the two historical traditions - - the biblical and the Renaissance humanist - - that, according to him, have fundamentally shaped the moral/theological and practical aspects of calling. His goal is to find some common ground by which he can reconcile the two traditions - - and the two aspects - - into some sort of coherent whole. Thus, in looking again at the Renaissance humanist tradition, he "corrects" for its rampant individualism, stressing the social and cultural contexts within which an individual's choices and decisions are made and shaped. (His position here is actually akin to a type of postmodernism called affirmative (Rosenau), as well as feminist theoretical work focused on the concept of positionality (Alcoff)). In other words, while retaining a degree of individualism in the Renaissance humanist tradition, Buford balances it by also arguing for its somewhat contingent nature.

In Buford's re-examination of the biblical tradition, he rethinks the meaning of imago dei, the idea that we are created in the image of God. Traditionally, according to Buford, "image of God" has meant "copy of God," with that which is copied being, most notably, God's rationality. For humans to be copies, though, implies considerable limitations, for it is then God, understood as the original, who determines human identities. Buford suggests instead that the imago dei in humans be understood not as a copy, but rather as a representation. He further suggests that what is most fundamentally represented about God in humanity is not rationality, but rather imagination. Since imagination implies a certain amount of freedom, human individuality and a certain degree of independence is maintained. Thus, while retaining the biblical assertion that human identity is grounded in God, a certain space - - the space of the imagination - - is opened up for human initiative and free play.

In Buford's reconstructions the humanist and biblical traditions come together insofar as they both allow for human freedom, while also both placing limits on that same freedom. One's calling, then, is to be worked out within the horizon of this tension between freedom and limitation. According to Buford, the task of colleges is to encourage the students' creative use of their imaginations, helping them to exercise a "new" freedom that they have in college to

develop their own life stories (i.e., their "callings"), over against the stories about themselves which they have inherited from their parents, hometowns, friends, schools, and/or churches. Equally, however, it is the duty of colleges to support, indeed, make known, the limitations that exist for students as they begin to take advantage of the possibilities in imaginatively re-writing their stories (i.e., "finding their callings").

Buford's book is extremely beneficial in tracing out the broad historical contexts that inform the ideals and interests of the present-day system of American higher education. And he teases out well the complicated intertwining relationships of the biblical and Renaissance humanist traditions - - particularly their somewhat distinct perspectives on calling. His breadth is also impressive, for though his professional training is in philosophy, he also makes forays into such diverse fields as biblical studies (in an exegesis of Genesis 1-2), Christian theology (while considering Augustine's view of personhood), educational psychology (in a review of William Perry's theory of the developmental stages of students), and business management (in order to summarize and critique the reengineering system proposed by Michael Hammer and James Campy). What is both puzzling and problematic, however, is his final chapter, in which his practical recommendations to colleges are presented.

Although he has earlier affirmed the need to work for a balance between freedom and limitation, his focus here is much more on the idea of maintaining limitations than enhancing freedoms. And, regarding the maintenance of limitations, he identifies two main interrelated obstacles that need to be countered: the canon and multiculturalism. His discussion of the canon is rather puzzling. On the one hand, he pleads for an open canon, because going back to the fixed canon of earlier generations is neither feasible nor desirable (p. 185). On the other hand, he is extremely wary of special-interest groups (i.e., multiculturalists, supporters of women's rights), which he views as desiring to take over the canon in order to impose their own political agenda onto everyone else. The solution he offers, instead, is to refer back, and utilize again, the biblical and Renaissance humanist traditions, after both have been appropriately reconstructed to suit present-day needs and circumstances. (Buford is not forthcoming on the specifics of what this reconstruction might look like.) His justification for the reappropriation of these two traditions is that they would make the most sense to our students, given their backgrounds.

The problems here are several-fold. First, Buford caricatures so-called special-interest groups. Far from wishing to "take over," most such groups see themselves, instead, as working to redress an identified imbalance in the canon, wherein its interests, concerns, and viewpoints are weighted towards a relatively narrow band of persons (i.e., white, male, educated, middle-to upper-class, heterosexual). Second, even though he admits that the ideals of the Bible and the Renaissance are no better or worse than those of any other traditions, his appeal to them as the best option (even if they are reconstructed), leads one to suspect - - whatever his disclaimers - - that he desires a return to an earlier, narrowly-defined, and fixed canon.

The most serious problem, though, seems to be his argument that these two traditions are to be preferred because they would be the most familiar, and thus the easiest, for students. Regarding their familiarity, Buford consistently operates with the notion that every student on campus is equally invested in and/or sympathetic to - - not to say knowledgeable of - - the ideals of the Bible and the Renaissance. He simply assumes the existence of a homogeneous student body, one in which all students have the same backgrounds and share equally in the same historical/cultural contexts. But that has never been quite the reality in American colleges, whatever the "myth" has been, and is even less so today.

But even if college students are most familiar with the Renaissance and biblical traditions, should we as educators necessarily just accommodate ourselves to their familiarity? Easy is not always the best. One of the reasons Buford gives for concentrating on the Biblical and Renaissance traditions

centers on the limited nature of a college's resources. "To expect an American college to teach every culture and language that students demand, as if those students will live out their calling in those cultures, is beyond the capability of the college. . ." (p.190). I am not gainsaying the challenge facing colleges in educating our students in a way that informs them and fosters in them an appreciation of the multiple cultures of the world in which they live. It is a task that requires all the imagination and effort we can possible marshal. It is, nevertheless, necessary. Our world is becoming ever smaller; the interconnections across political and social boundaries are becoming increasingly numerous and marked. Despite Buford's disclaimer, it is, in fact, highly likely that a significant number of our students will live out their callings in a culture far different from the one in which they were raised!

We, as educators, need to think harder, and even more imaginatively than Buford advocates, in order to see our way to an education for our students that will satisfy the demands of the 21st century.

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Blair, Nebraska

Gettysburg College
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Grand View College
Des Moines, Iowa

Gustavus Adolphus College
St. Peter, Minnesota

Lenoir-Rhyne College
Hickory, North Carolina

Luther College
Decorah, Iowa

Midland Lutheran College
Fremont, Nebraska

Muhlenberg College
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Newberry College
Newberry, South Carolina

Pacific Lutheran University
Tacoma, Washington

Roanoke College
Salem, Virginia

St. Olaf College
Northfield, Minnesota

Suomi College
Hancock, Michigan

Susquehanna University
Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania

Texas Lutheran University
Seguin, Texas

Thiel College
Greenville, Pennsylvania

Wagner College
Staten Island, New York

Waldorf College
Forest City, Iowa

Wartburg College
Waverly, Iowa

Wittenberg University
Springfield, Ohio