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# *Intégrité:* *A Faith and Learning Journal*

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Christ the Bear:  
**The Messianic Identity in Richard Adams's *Shardik***

David Puller

The British novelist Richard Adams (b. 1920) studied history at Oxford and served as a paratrooper during World War II. After the war, he worked as a civil servant while composing *Watership Down*, his first and most widely read novel. *Watership Down* made Adams famous, but he considers *Shardik*, his second novel, to be his best and most spiritually significant work. *Shardik* is, Adams explains, “my conception of finding God” (Interview by Fritz 71-72).

*Shardik* is a work of fantasy about how faith can be used and abused and how religious narratives can morally transform societies. The central figure in the novel is Shardik, a bear worshipped as a god by a primitive people. The bear, which is variously exalted and enslaved, ultimately suffers a heroic death. Adams's bear is a messiah figure—a representation of Christ—albeit a different sort of messiah. Through his tale, Adams explores the constructive and destructive effects of impassioned religious belief. He argues for a Christianity that is focused on improving the world rather than justifying its authenticity. *Shardik* is a novel particularly relevant to the Christian life as it summons believers to mission and direct action in a broken world.

*Shardik* is set in an Iron Age society called the Beklan Empire. The city of Bekla rules several provinces and tributary states, of which the island of Ortelga is the northernmost. In the distant past, Ortelga was the mighty nation that built Bekla. Now it is an impoverished client state on the Beklan frontier. Ortelgans have long believed that God would come one day in the form of a bear: “He is from God—God is in him—he is the Power of God—he departed and is to return” (64). This bear would be known as “Shardik,” which means “the Power of God” in the Ortelgan language.

The novel begins with a huge bear appearing on the island of Ortelga. Kelderek, a hunter nicknamed “Play-with-the-Children” due to his kindness to children, discovers the bear. When the Ortelgans learn of the bear, they conclude that Shardik has returned to them. The characters envision different purposes for the bear, disputing over the meaning of the messianic prophecy. To the Tuginda—the traditional spiritual leader of the Ortelgans—Shardik's arrival means a spiritual revolution. She says that the Ortelgans must patiently wait for the bear-god to reveal the specific implications of that revolution. But to much of the populace, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Shardik means the conquest of Bekla—a reversal of the political order which subordinates them. Whipped into a religious fervor by political leaders, the Ortelgans march on Bekla. With total

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strategic surprise and good luck on their side, the Ortelgans conquer the city of Bekla.

The war drags on in a bloody stalemate for several years as the Ortelgans struggle to subdue Bekla's provinces. To raise money for their military efforts, the Ortelgans revive the detested slave trade—an act viewed by many people in the empire as morally despicable. The meaning of the messianic prophecy of Shardik continues to be the central question pondered over and argued among the novel's characters. At the conclusion of the novel and the death of Shardik, Kelderek discerns a specific expression of the Tuginda's vision which becomes the foundation for the lasting cult of Shardik.

Of the many myths of bears, messiahs and sacrificial gods, it is the story of the Christian messiah that is the closest parallel. But what manner of Christ is Shardik? Are Shardik and the Christ of traditional, orthodox Christianity comparable?

This article responds to these questions by comparing the messianic figure of Shardik with that of the Christian messianic figure of Jesus Christ. It delineates the hypostatic nature of these figures and their messianic purposes as understood by their adherents. It examines how Adams, influenced by Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, and his own spiritual experience, developed a messianic image for the bear-god. Finally, it explains the relevance of the missional nature of this messianic identity of Shardik for Christians today.

Two theologically essential characteristics of Christ are divinity and humanity. Shardik's possession, or lack thereof, of these characteristics creates crucial ambiguities that shape the analysis of the novel. A sound assessment, therefore, begins with an appraisal of the theological natures of both Christ and Shardik.

In orthodox Christianity, Christ is both fully divine and fully human. As Thomas Aquinas puts it, "...though there is one subsisting being in him, yet there are different aspects of subsistence, and hence He is said to be a composite person, in so far as one being subsists in two" (3.2.4). Similarly, Shardik is one being—a composite bear, to modify Aquinas's phrase—yet is both fully divine and fully a wild animal. Kelderek explains, "He was the Power of God, but he was an actual bear" (614). Kelderek's model of the hypostatic union is not as developed as that of Aquinas, but he firmly establishes a divine and earthly unity. Shardik behaves in the manner of a wild bear. Because of his animalistic behavior, many characters do not accept his divinity until the end of the novel, when he splits a boulder into pieces with blows of his paws. Even to Shardik's enemies, this supernatural display of strength is "like a miracle...like an old tale beyond belief" (548) and proof of his divinity.

But regardless of the characters' conclusions, Adams seems inconsistent. In interviews about this novel, he argues that he never intended to assert that Shardik was divine:

There is no suggestion in the book that Shardik is anything but a bear. I have always believed that there are many different levels on which truth exists...one person comes along and sees an

obscure Galilean peasant being put to death for insurrection and another sees God almighty.... I did not intend that Shardik should be taken as a transcendental creature. (Interview by Barron 10-11)

The divinity of Shardik or Christ is entirely subjective. Adams argues that disbelief by some does not invalidate belief by others:

When religious significance is attributed to any incident or happening the validity is subjective, is in the believer's mind. Yet there are always other people prepared to argue that nothing out of the ordinary occurred. It is quite true that the bear is a bear is a bear. W.H. Auden said that he could readily imagine himself as an ancient Greek philosopher walking past the crosses on which Jesus and the thieves were crucified, and taking no notice of them at all, while he was discussing some obtruse point of philosophy with a fellow Greek. All they would have seen out of the tail of their eye would have been three common criminals being executed. (Interview by Vine 26)

To the reader of *Shardik*, these are baffling statements, as they are difficult to reconcile with the text of the novel. The bear-god performs a feat that normal bears cannot do, and this evidence is taken as definitive proof of divinity even by those who despise him. How then can the reader accept Adams's description of his intentions?

Adams's intellectual background provides perspective on this issue. He is deeply influenced by two twentieth-century thinkers: Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung. Adams directly attributes his writing career to Campbell, a prominent American mythologist:

It was through [*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Campbell] that I learned that God meant me to be a storyteller.... And if it wasn't for Joseph Campbell, those books wouldn't be there on that table now. I would never have written anything. (Interview by Swaim)

Due consideration of Campbell is especially useful when reading *Shardik* because Adams attributes his understanding of the Passion of Christ to reading Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and *The Masks of God* (Day 130).

The work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung is likewise essential to understanding Adams's worldview. Adams explains,

During the 1950's I had a Jungian analysis which lasted for three years. I learnt about the importance and power of dreams and the relevance of dreams to the imaginative and creative life and certainly I think that the ideas of Jung and my experience of

Jungian analysis have had a great deal of effect on my work.  
(Interview by Vine 21)

Adams experienced the power of dreams strongly while composing *Shardik*. Bridgman writes, “He has said that complete episodes came to him in dreams” (12).

The reader can clearly see the influence of Campbell and Jung in his understanding of truths found within narrative. Like them, Adams lives outside of fixed true-false categories. He best expresses this perspective on logical contradiction in *Maia*, his prequel to *Shardik*. In *Maia*, the character Occula tells a story of two gods in the Beklan pantheon and explains how some people are unable to grasp the larger, transcendent truth found beyond the factual narrative. Occula says,

You simply can't get the truth across to some people: it's like blowin' a trumpet in the ear of a stone-deaf man. These stories are no good unless you find them and feel them for yourself. The whole point is that two completely different and contradictory things can be true at one and the same time. (746-47)

So the reader may take *Shardik* to be a divine figure or merely a bear. Both premises, though contradictory, may be true. Placing these premises in opposition only leads to misunderstanding. The reality of any event is personal or, as Campbell puts it, “the individual is now on his own” (*Creative Mythology* 622). Reflecting on a shaman calling himself an animal, Jung writes that “in the primitive's world, things do not have the same sharp boundaries that they do in our ‘rational’ world” (“Approaching the Unconscious” 45). Adams, embracing what the primitive has retained, sees no need to stumble over the nature of the bear. *Shardik* may serve as a legitimate messianic and divine Christ-figure even if neither *Shardik* nor Christ is divine.

Yet unlike Christ, this messiah does not speak. *Shardik* may have the divinity of Christ, but he completely lacks the humanity of Christ. He is a wild animal. *Shardik* is a primitive god for a primitive people, one whom Joseph Campbell might call a “totemistically conceived society” rooted in a lifestyle of hunting and intimate with the animal world (*Primitive Mythology* 295). The cult of *Shardik* is a rejection of the cosmopolitan for the rural, the sophisticated for the tribal. For example, the Ortelgan occupiers shut down the theaters in Bekla ostensibly because they relate to the worship of the Beklan god Cran, but more likely because the stage is urbane (*Shardik* 267). Cran is an anthropomorphic god worshipped in the city, whereas *Shardik* is an entirely animalistic god worshipped in the hinterland.

What is this animal in whom the Ortelgans have found God? They are bears—creatures that in literature, Jerome Stueart writes, “have a sense of the supernatural in them” and “a religious/philosophical message for mankind” (201). In *The Bear: History of a Fallen King*, Michel Pastoureau tracks the long decline of the bear as a symbol of divinity and power in Europe. As Europe urbanized,

the bear fell from its status as king of the beasts to a chained and humiliated clown (171-74). Ironically, though they worshipped the bear, in order to control their urbanized empire, the Ortelgans expressed the medieval tendency to control the bear by hobbling their god Shardik with a choke-chain so they could safely subdue and cage him in Bekla (*Shardik* 228). The Ortelgans almost killed their messiah in their efforts to rule him.

Shardik expressed his outrage to such mistreatment with fits of violence and roaring. He is a wild animal, not an intelligent creature who communicates using words. He cannot directly teach in an expository manner as Christ did. Shardik's followers can only interpret the bear's actions, which are often violently unpredictable, as symbolic of God's will. Sometimes Shardik, contrary to the way of wild bears, allows priestesses to worship him at close range and tend to his wounds. At other times, he lashes out and slays his devotees. With Shardik, there is always danger and uncertainty. The Tuginda explains,

By worshipping him thus we put a narrow, swaying bridge across the ravine that separates his savage nature from our own; and so in time we become able to walk without stumbling through the fire of his presence.... Shardik is always more dangerous than lightning, more uncertain than the Telthearna [River] in the rains. (107)

Christ, in contrast, can speak and interact with people as a fellow human. He does not have a bear's communicative limitations or brutal temperament.

These critical differences between the humanity of Christ and the animalistic nature of Shardik allow the bear-god's followers to envision widely divergent interpretations of the meaning of his messiahship. In what way shall Shardik be the messiah? Shardik cannot answer directly. This is the core problem over which Kelderek and other characters struggle. It is best to explore their disputed visions chronologically as they develop in the novel.

These varying interpretations begin as soon as the bear crosses the river to Ortelga to flee a forest fire. While being chased through the forest by a leopard, Kelderek stumbles over the badly-injured bear. The bear strikes the leopard down with a single blow. Kelderek then recognizes this bear in particular as Shardik because of his saving activity. When he tells the Tuginda of the arrival of the long-awaited messiah, he confirms the bear's identity by also noting Shardik's wounds, saying, "I saw the burns on his side—I saw that they hurt him" (53). These burns serve as stigmata. To Kelderek, it is the life-saving work of the wounded Shardik that forms the core of his messianic identity. It is to this identity of the messiah as the suffering life-saver that Kelderek will ultimately return after embracing and then rejecting more militant and exploitative interpretations of the Shardik narrative.

Chronologically, the next interpreter of the messianic prophecy is the Tuginda, who is the high priestess of the traditional Shardik cult. She teaches Kelderek that although they know that Shardik has returned to his people, his purpose remains mysterious: "Our work is simply to wait, to be ready to perceive and carry out God's will, whatever it may be" (99). She rejects the notion that

Shardik has returned to restore Ortelgan power, saying, “It has never been foretold that Shardik’s return will necessarily mean that power and rule is to be restored to the Ortelgans. Indeed, there is a saying, ‘God does not do the same thing twice’” (69). The role of Shardik’s followers, the Tuginda argues, is to “Simply wait upon God” with “a humble and honest heart” for “he can tell us nothing if we will not hear” (69). Patience is necessary, the Tuginda maintains, because “God can afford to wait” (410).

This proves to be an unpopular approach. The people of Ortelga do not support the Tuginda’s desire to patiently wait for Shardik as he roams freely in the forest. They interpret his arrival as a sign that God means for the Ortelgans to conquer Bekla and plunder its riches. They were “all convinced that Bekla was destined to fall to the revealed power of God, by whose will they were to have full stomachs and never toil again” (129). Defying the Tuginda’s counsel, the Ortelgans hurriedly begin raising an army before Bekla can learn of Shardik and defend itself (129-130).

Their perception of Shardik as a military messiah is not without grounds and an echo of it can be found in Christian history. Even the more spiritually minded Tuginda relates the assassination of the last incarnated Shardik with the collapse of the ancient Ortelgan empire (67-68). Likewise, the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament suggest the coming of a military liberator who would ensure that “[i]n his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety” (Jer. 23.6 NRSV). This messiah would be a warrior-king like David (Isa. 9.7), and the Davidic origin of Jesus was endorsed by early Christianity (Matt. 15.22, 20.30, Mark 10.47, Luke 3.31). Thus, the martial vision of the messiah narrative cannot be wholly dismissed by Christianity either.

It should not be surprising that many Jews of first-century Palestine envisioned the messianic prophecies as militaristic in nature. The messiah, as Geza Vermes put it, was to be “victor over the Gentiles, saviour and restorer of Israel” (131). Self-proclaimed messiahs and prophets in first-century Palestine were noted for their involvement with guerilla movements against the Roman occupation (Vermes 98-99). Some of Jesus’s followers hoped that he would adopt this role, but in the orthodox version of the Jesus story, the messiah explicitly rejected this vision of his messianic identity (Matt. 20.25-26, Acts 1.6-8). In the Christian perspective, Joseph Klausner writes, “The Messiah did not come to redeem from political oppression and economic wrong, but to redeem from spiritual evil alone” (526).

These conflicting visions are similar to the clash between the Ortelgans’ militant, aggressive interpretation and the peaceful, patient interpretation of the Tuginda. The militant interpretation of messiahship successfully hijacks the Shardik movement to a degree never achieved in First Century Christianity. As Edgar Chapman says of this point of divergence in *Shardik*,

There is also something fatefully ambiguous about the way man responds to and uses the incarnation of the divine in this world. He may pervert the divine revelation into an excuse for a crusade or

holy war, and thus advance the cause of destruction rather than the cause of life. (10)

*Shardik* is, in this way, a disturbing alternate history of Christianity and the life of the Christian messiah. It serves as a reminder to modern Christians to examine their motives for and the effects of their faith at work in the world.

The definitive interpretation of the messianic purpose of *Shardik* begins to form after the bear escapes from captivity in Bekla. Kelderek pursues the bear into the wilderness, initially in the hope of recapturing *Shardik* and forcing him to again aid Ortelgan military goals. After much hardship, Kelderek finds himself in the wilderness of Zeray—a lawless town and region inhabited by criminals and exiles. Kelderek joins *Shardik* in his suffering at the hands of a great evil and, upon witnessing *Shardik*'s sacrificial death, finds a transcendent meaning in that death.

Kelderek falls into the hands of Genshed, a slave trader who is the summation of cruelties that Adams either witnessed during World War II (Interview by Barron 10) or experienced through literature and drama. Though superficially based on Simon Legree from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Genshed is, more broadly, a sadistic Mr. Punch—the villain with a thousand faces who haunts Adams (*Day*48, 101-03).

He carefully depicts Genshed as an anti-Christ figure, not in the sense of the demonic figure of John's Revelation, but in that Genshed is the antithesis of Christ in the pureness and majesty of his evil. This is clearest when Adams mimics Biblical descriptions of Christ (Luke 7.22, John 15.4-6, 15.16, 16.33, Acts 1.6-7) to depict Genshed as supernaturally able to drive his slaves beyond exhaustion:

He it was who had the power to make the lame walk, the sick rise up and the hungry to overcome their faintness. They had not chosen him, but he had chosen them. Without him they could do nothing, but now he abode in them and they in him. He had overcome the world, so that life became a simple matter, without distraction, of moving by his will to the end which he had appointed.... It was not for them to know the times or seasons which Genshed had put in his own power. It was enough for them to do his will. (526-27)

Adams's attention to developing Genshed is essential to complete what he calls "the inexorable course of the story" (*Day* 102) and the role of *Shardik* as the messiah. Adams builds up Genshed's cruelties so that he may be a foe worthy of *Shardik*'s sacrificial death. *Shardik*'s death must bring about a great victory comparable to Christ's victory over sin through his crucifixion. As Jesus must have a Satan to vanquish to be Christ, so the bear must have a Genshed to destroy to be *Shardik*. Adams explains,

But it has always been my view that if you are going to make good triumph over evil, then evil has got to be shown as really and truly evil. That is why the Genshed passages in *Shardik* are so terrible, because the good has got to be shown as triumphing over real and actual evil. The passion of Our Lord includes some of the most dreadful things, which don't seem to strike home to people now. How dreadful the passion of Our Lord was! (Interview by Vine 27)

Kelderek, with the few exhausted, starving child slaves still in Genshed's captivity, is near death when he prays for the arrival of the messiah: "O hear us, defiled and lost, we who wasted thy life and call upon thee! Let us die, Lord *Shardik*, let us die with thee, only save thy children from this wicked man!" (533) Genshed has successfully epitomized evil to the point where a divine force is needed to defeat him.

*Shardik* then appears from the forest and attacks Genshed. Although starving and dying from his wounds, *Shardik* strikes Genshed, killing him and breaking apart the boulder upon which Genshed stands (533-36). This moment will become, for Kelderek and his revised religion, the messianic identity of *Shardik*: the god who died to save the lives of children.

After the death of *Shardik*, this new defining narrative of the messiah begins to congeal immediately. At the funeral of *Shardik* three days later, Kelderek proclaims a new name for the bear-god, calling him "Lord *Shardik Die-for-the-Children*" (362). This name reflects Kelderek's extended name at the beginning of the novel, before his fall from grace, when he was known as "Kelderek Play-with-the-Children." When he was an innocent and naïve young man, Kelderek believed that caring for children was important, for "[s]ome of the children I play with are unhappy. Some of them have no parents—their parents have deserted them." Children are "[t]he flames of God" (28) and therefore merit compassion and kindness by the adults in their communities.

Kelderek's re-envisioning of *Shardik*'s messianic identity constitutes a return to his own ideals before he was seduced by power. Kelderek, Adams explains, "had the jewel in his pocket all along" (Interview by Barron 13). Kelderek intuitively grasped the purpose of *Shardik* before he had even met the bear. Joseph Campbell explains this experience, writing that spiritual truth is, "...inherent in the episodes of men's normal daily lives, displayed for those with eyes to see in the sights of common day. As in the words of the Gnostic Thomas Gospel; 'The Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it'" (*Creative Mythology* 484).

At the practical level, the new cult of *Shardik* focuses on the needs of children to grow up physically and emotionally healthy, as Kelderek explains to *Siristrou*, a visiting foreign ambassador, at the conclusion of the novel:

The teaching, as you call it, is simply that there isn't to be a deserted or unhappy child in the world. In the end, that's the world's only security: children are the future, you see. If there were no unhappy children, then the future would be secure....

Children—they're born of mutual pleasure and joy—or they ought to be. And God means them to grow up—well, watertight, like a sound canoe; fit to work and play, buy and sell, laugh and cry. Slavery—real slavery's being robbed of any chance of becoming complete. The unwanted, the deprived and deserted—they're slaves all right—even if they don't know it themselves. (613)

Shardik is thus the liberator of children from abuse and neglect. This is the final messianic image of the bear-god.

It is significantly different from Christ's messianic role as the liberator of humanity from sin. Although the Christian may see the suffering that Kelderek describes as the consequence of sin in the world, Christianity's messiah is concerned with sin in general. Theologian Thomas Oden summarizes this view by writing, "Christianly understood, atonement is the satisfaction made for sin by the death of Christ that makes possible the salvation of humanity" (352). It is a broad and all-encompassing salvation, capable of restoring the entire fallen world. Christ's messianic domain includes and extends beyond the abuse of children. But the liberation of enslaved children is similar to what Oden calls the "diplomatic metaphor" of salvation—the act of freeing slaves in which "Christ is the liberator from bondage" (357-58). *Shardik's* messiah, in contrast, is a focused deity addressing one issue—a fitting concentration in the polytheistic mythos of *Shardik*.

Both messiahs, Christ and Shardik, bring about their revelation of a new, transformative story through their own suffering and death, albeit with different effects and importance of these hardships. Here, Christianity and the cult of Shardik find common ground in what the *Shardik* character Siristrou calls "the concept of benefit from a divine death" (618). This motif of the suffering messiah is a major focus of Adams's depiction of Shardik. It merits a thorough examination.

Adams's concept of atonement in *Shardik* differs from the substitutionary atonement of Christianity. Traditional Christianity asserts that Christ's sacrificial death was necessary to free people from their sins. Christ substituted himself on the cross to pay the sin debt of humanity in an act of free grace. John Calvin explains that "...by the sacrifice of Christ we obtain justification, and become pleasing to God, though we are by nature the children of wrath, and by sin estranged from him" (2.17.2). Pardon for sins is essential in Christianity. In contrast, Kelderek, when pressed, shies away from the concept of divine forgiveness for sins, saying that formal forgiveness by Shardik is less important than the work that must follow upon accepting his teaching: "[F]orgiveness matters much less—the work's too important" (615). This is in keeping with Adams's own uneasiness with substitutionary atonement, as he expresses while reflecting on the Passion hymns that were a part of his religious upbringing:

I don't know how much effect this sort of stuff had on other boys, for we never talked about religion among ourselves, but it shook me all right, and has left me all my life with a sickened horror of

Christ's passion. . . . I wish—and I dare say I am not the only person to have wished—that Christ had not died as He did. (Neither Mohammed, Buddha nor Confucius were put to death.) Nor can I see what good it did for us as Christians. . . . However, He preferred His integrity, and no doubt He was right in reckoning that His teaching would not be likely to endure if He showed that He valued His own life above it. (*Day* 130)

For Adams, Christ is primarily a teacher of wisdom. Christ's death is principally what Joseph Campbell calls "a splendid lesson in integrity and fortitude" (*The Hero* 213). Likewise, Shardik's death is more of an opportunity to see the truth and engage in righteousness than a metaphysical elimination of sin from the life of the believer. As Campbell puts it, "[T]he paramount concern of a popular religion cannot be and never has been, 'Truth,' but the maintenance of a certain type of society" (*Occidental Mythology* 378). Adams is less concerned with the truth of Shardik's nature and his death than how people respond to Shardik.

When asked directly if Shardik makes propitiation for the sins of his followers by his own suffering and death, Adams replies, "He certainly does not do it consciously. . . . What happens in the Streels of Urtah is that Shardik did take on himself the guilt incurred by Kelderek in his name. On the other hand, all that really happened is that a bear went into a ravine" (Interview by Barron 10-11).

Again, Adams is comfortable with contradiction. His depiction of atonement is ambiguous, particularly in other parts of the story which express a theology of atonement more in keeping with traditional Christianity. For example, the Beklan nobleman Elleroth, having captured Kelderek at the end of the novel, does not avenge himself upon Kelderek. Instead, Elleroth declares that "all debts are cleared by Shardik's death—his sacred death" (572). A more explicit endorsement of free grace is found on the lips of the priestess Melathys, who explains that "the task of the disgraced and the guilty is not to struggle to redeem themselves but simply to wait, never to cease to wait, in the hope and expectation of redemption" (432). These expressions of the Christian concept of redeeming grace are never repudiated by Kelderek, thus presenting a mixed message on the subject of the atonement provided by the ursine messiah. The reader must simply accept uncertainty about the soteriological implications of Shardik's death. To account for Adams's attempts at clarification, the reader would do well to remember Jung's counsel: "Poets are human too, and what they say about their work is often far from being the best word on the subject" ("Psychology and Literature" 94).

Although the personal redemption provided by Shardik is uncertain, the similar suffering between Shardik and the Christian messiah is striking and is a mirror of the Christological motif of the "suffering servant" of Isaiah 53:1-12. The bear is depicted in a manner parallel to Christ as the "lord of the bloody wounds" (533), who endures pain, sickness and starvation. This is in keeping with Western symbolism for the bear. As Pastoureau writes, "The bear of oral tradition is always an unhappy creature" (244).

Shardik is forsaken by his followers. Like Isaiah's suffering servant, Shardik was "one from whom others hide their faces" (53:3 NRSV). As Peter denies knowing Christ three times, so does Kelderek deny knowing Shardik three times and curses him, finally saying to his accusers, "I wouldn't know the bear if I saw it. To hell with the bear!" (428)

Adams emphasizes the suffering servant motif in two specific episodes. First, after Shardik's escape from captivity in Bekla, he wanders into the northern wilderness with Kelderek following. He enters into a set of three deep crevasses known as the "Streels of Urtah" which the Tuginda describes as "the mouths to hell" (386). The mystical purpose of the streels is to punish the wicked, who feel drawn to enter but never return. Shardik, defying all expectations, emerges from the streels. Like Isaiah's servant, he accepts and then overcomes the sins of others. The Tuginda explains that leaving the streels "is a sign that God has sanctified him and intends to make use of his death for some blessed and mysterious purpose of His own" (388).

Shardik then turns east to end his journey and his life as the suffering servant. He crosses the Vrako River, separating the Beklan Empire and the region known as Zeray. Crossing this river is presented in *Shardik* as entering an underworld, as the region is commonly known as a place of the damned and a refuge for exiles and criminals. The bear, though deathly ill and with a variety of directions to choose from, crosses the river into this terrible place. So, too, did the Christian messiah choose suffering. Oden explains, "Jesus was not merely a passive victim, but active Victor...willing through love to lay down his life for others" (323). Shardik, like Christ, chose to accept suffering and exile without compulsion. As Isaiah's suffering servant is an innocent victim, so does Shardik "fall prey to the greed and evil in the heart of Man" (*Shardik* 533).

Most importantly, both suffering servants endure sacrificial death on behalf of others who, to quote Isaiah, "like sheep have gone astray" (53:6 NRSV), or Adams, "fear and know thee not" (*Shardik* 533). Calvin writes that "to this end Christ, by dying, overcame Satan, who had the power of death" (1.14.18). The god was willingly sacrificed for earthly benefit. So, too, does Shardik, in sacrificial death, triumph over a particular evil—the abuse of children—and offer a form of salvation to Kelderek through his own death:

The mysterious gift of Shardik's death, he now knew, transcended all personal shame and unworthiness, just as a prince mourning his father's death must contain his grief and be strong to assume, as a sacred trust, the responsibilities and cares of state which have fallen upon him. In spite of mankind and of all folly, Shardik had completed his work and returned to God. (551)

Shardik, though enslaved, imprisoned and wounded, is ultimately victorious in his mission. He is Jung's archetype of "the physician who heals wounds [and] is himself the bearer of a wound" ("Psychology and Literature" 103-04). Like Christ, Shardik exits the story in death with "a portion among the great" (Isaiah 53:12 NRSV).

The transcendent death of Shardik apparent in the eyes of his followers completes his own messianic identity. Shardik remains dead at the conclusion of the novel, with no speculation of his possible return in living form. Christ, however, resurrected, ascended, and promised to return. This is essential to his messianic identity. Oden explains that upon the death, rebirth, and ascension of Christ, “[t]he messianic reign of the promised Davidic heir had thereby begun. The blessings of the messianic age were already beginning to be experienced. They await a future consummation in the return of the messianic king” (525). Here, the two messiah narratives diverge once more as Adams’s messiah story takes a missional direction.

Given Adams’s skepticism of the sacrificial god motif, the reader must ask why he chose to make that narrative central to the novel and why that tragedy was not reversed by a Christ-like resurrection. Perhaps the only way to ensure that Shardik would not continue to be exploited would be to remove him from the interpretive scene. Joseph Campbell warns, “The hero of yesterday becomes the tyrant of tomorrow, unless he crucifies himself today” (*The Hero* 303). As a dead god, Shardik would cease to be useful to the Ortelgan conquerors, if not become a liability. But more importantly, the permanent death of Shardik takes the emphasis off the bear-god as an agent of change and gives that responsibility to his followers. What Oden calls the “consummation” of Christ’s messianic identity is the work of Christ (525). But the consummation of Shardik as messiah lies entirely in the hands of his followers. This difference is critical because Adams’s greatest priority is the practical impact of the messiah narrative.

Again, Adams de-emphasizes the role of the messiah as a supernatural force to focus on the role of the messiah as a teacher. The future of Shardik himself is less significant than the future of what his people do with his teachings. Adams explains, “The bear simply exists as a prop.... It is not the bear itself which matters; it is the qualities and character that are attributed to the bear” (Interview by Vine 26).

The resurrection of Shardik would have proven the bear’s divinity by an even greater degree than the miracle of the cleaving of the boulder. But as the followers of a dead god, the task of Kelderek and his coreligionists is to prove the authenticity of the cult of Shardik by carrying out his humanitarian mission. The legitimate skepticism of the people of the empire for a dead god—and one associated with brutal oppressors—would challenge adherents to demonstrate through benevolence that Shardik was truly divine by the way that he morally transforms his followers. Book VII of the novel, which begins after the death of Shardik, is entitled “The Power of God”—the meaning of Shardik’s name when translated into English. Yet Shardik is dead throughout its length. This is not an error. The Power of God on earth is not Shardik, but what Shardik’s followers do with his story.

Thus the teaching of Shardik, rather than his death, is the center of his story—so much so that, as Adams explains, “I have even tried telling the story omitting the physical reality of the bear completely” (Interview by Barron 11). This is a departure from the Christian perspective, which balances the importance of the life, death, and resurrection of the messiah with his moral teaching.

The emphasis on the messiah as teacher is particularly striking in the original draft of the novel, rejected by the publisher. The published edition concludes with a visiting ambassador writing a letter to his king that describes his journey into the Beklan Empire and an encounter with the curious cult of Shardik. In the original draft, Adams placed the events of the novel not in a completely fictional universe, but in a remote region of twentieth-century Earth. The visitors encountering the cult of Shardik are an American anthropologist and his daughter. The myth of Shardik captivates them and transforms their lives (Interview by Barron 13-14). They follow Jung's advice on understanding a story: "To grasp its meaning, we must allow it to shape us as it shaped him" ("Psychology and Literature" 105). Upon their return to the modern Western world, they take a young child from a broken home into their own family (Interview by Barron 13-14). Adams himself took Alice Pinto, a young girl from a dysfunctional family, into his home when she was a minor. This novel is dedicated to her (Bridgman 12). To Adams, the validity of the Shardik narrative is not as important as allowing it to speak an important truth and call listeners to action. Religion does not need to express objective historical and supernatural truth, but it must provide what the visiting ambassador in *Shardik* calls "reason emerging from legend" (619).

Adams's desire is for a Christianity less concerned with arguing for its factual, historical accuracy and more focused on advancing a story that has a positive impact on the broken people of this world. It is a deeply relevant call for modern Christians. Apart from logic and evidence, how does the world see Christianity as true? How is the world convinced that the mission of the Christian messiah is a noble one?

Richard Adams responds in *Shardik*: by the lives that Christians live in a justifiably skeptical world. Is the Christ story correct in all of its historical particulars? To Adams, this is the wrong question. The correct question is: How does the Christ story transform the lives of its believers?

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**“Jesus, Take the Wheel”:**  
Evangelical Christianity on *American Idol*

Eleanor Hersey Nickel

Since its first season in summer 2002, *American Idol* has featured many evangelical singers, including country stars like Carrie Underwood with her hit “Jesus, Take the Wheel” and those like Mandisa and Chris Sligh who have gone on to careers in Contemporary Christian Music. Given the central role of vocal music in American churches and the fact that many finalists have come from southern Bible Belt states, it is not surprising that they come to Hollywood with crosses around their necks and a readiness to talk about Jesus that seems a bit jarring on prime-time television. Yet the Hollywood studio in which the live shows are broadcast is a primarily liberal and secular environment, in which guest artists perform sexually explicit songs and where recent judge Ellen DeGeneres is one of America’s most famous lesbians. This leads to inevitable tensions as conflicts between conservative and liberal Americans are staged, although with caution based on the producers’ desire to maintain high ratings and contestants’ appeal to a wide voting audience. The result is a rhetorical space in which the host, judges, and contestants maintain a careful balance, avoiding discussion of sin or moral judgment about issues like homosexuality while celebrating Christian churches as sources of musical heritage, personal empowerment, and social justice. While it is clear that the producers control the series, Christian contestants perform minor acts of resistance and offer alternative religious viewpoints that challenge the producers’ portrayal of the entertainment industry and belie the one-dimensional view of evangelicals that is normally found on television. *American Idol* provides an excellent example of the challenges and opportunities that evangelicals face in twenty-first-century America, a largely post-Christian culture in which Christian faith tends to be portrayed not as a norm or ideal, but as one option within a diverse, multicultural nation.

Academic Judgments of *American Idol*: Is There Room for Faith?

Reality television is notorious for being so tightly controlled by producers through their casting, editing, and manipulation of scenarios that participants have limited agency and find it difficult to make their own decisions or challenge the prevailing rhetoric of the series. Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn note that “one of the most recurrent features of the popular and critical reception of Reality TV has been comment on the ways in which it manipulates and constructs ‘the real,’ and hence the contested nature of the term ‘Reality TV’ itself” (11). Rather than

clinging to inadequate binaries such as “fact” and “fiction,” however, they argue that we should open ourselves to the play of representation that these shows offer and resist the impulse to categorize participants and viewers as easily duped. Since most participants are familiar with the conventions of the shows before appearing on them, it has become routine for them “to talk explicitly about the politics of how they are being ‘represented’ at the level of the *text itself*” (11-12). Laurie Ouellette and Susan Murray agree that “viewers have certainly been well trained in the ways of reality TV since its initial emergence and are therefore quite savvy and skeptical when it comes to how much is actually ‘real’ in these programs” (5-6). Of course, the decision to appear on a show necessarily limits the freedom to mock, complain, and protest that audiences generally enjoy. One of the most significant questions that critics can ask of reality series is to what extent participants have the power to use language that the producers would not use, or deliver “lines” that the producers would not have scripted and may strongly disagree with themselves.

Because *American Idol* and its global counterparts focus on making contestants into celebrities, critics have been skeptical about contestants’ ability to resist whatever “identities” the producers choose to give them. Simon Cowell argues that “the premise of the show, in its continual reiteration to identify who will *become* the idol, would seem to demand a self-fashioning on the part of the contestants that involves a certain abstraction, an effacement of difference.” Holmes claims that the British “*Pop Idol* certainly places an emphasis on the labor of producing the star. It not only foregrounds the work on singing and dancing but openly acknowledges the styling and packaging of the image” (155). Given these realities, Matthew Wheelock Stahl accuses the American series of false consciousness: “Fans and idols are entwined by the telling of a story of success based on merit and character, of the hard work of honest folk rewarded, and of the hard knocks delivered by a tough but fair system” (221). Australian, Dutch, and Norwegian scholars draw similar conclusions: “The competition appears so carefully controlled and scripted as to be rigged” (Fairchild 360); “Behind the magical formula of the ‘X factor’ are contemporary idols of social success” (Reijnders, Rooijackers, and van Zoonen 284); and “*Idol* is not the open and fair campaign it is projected to be” (Kjus 295). Recent books on *American Idol* conclude, “*Idol* is a machine which produces packaged, commodified Celebrity products” (Bell 164); “The strongest Idol potential seems located in those whose lives can be edited to fit familiar accounts of the American Dream” (Meizel 82); and “Through the archetypes, each contestant was boiled down to an easily digestible persona, familiar and predictable” (McClain 229). Critics have been cynical about the audience vote, which Cowell calls “the fantasy of a participatory democracy” and Henry Jenkins calls “a fantasy of empowerment” (347), because judges choose the pool of contestants.

Scholars have examined the role of religion on *American Idol*, but most have not considered evangelical contestants as a potential source of resistance to the producers’ control. Some critics suggest that the producers are anti-Christian and that this bias may cause difficulty for religious contestants and viewers, but they give no specific examples. Sabatino DiBernardo examines the series as

supportive of postmodern idolatry, citing a judge's negative reaction when "one *American Idol* contestant with apparently evangelical affiliation performed a Gospel song" but providing no further details. Which season? Which judge? Which contestant? Which song? In *American Idol After Iraq: Competing for Hearts and Minds in the Global Media Age*, Nathan Gardels and Mike Medavoy describe how American media exports can offend conservative Muslims with their secular and often explicitly sexual content: "Sometimes films and television shows mislead outsiders about American life, for example by the near total absence of religious expression" (4). The title suggests that *American Idol* exemplifies this problem, yet the book contains no analysis of the series or acknowledgement that the contestants regularly express their religious views. Katherine Meizel recognizes that Christian contestants resist the materialism of the series, but her focus on civil religion emphasizes the group performances and finale rituals in which the producers encourage church and gospel resonances: "Openness about faith works in favor of *American Idol's* contestants...and of the show itself" (105). This does not match up with the behind-the-scenes experience of *Los Angeles Times* reporter Richard Rushfield, who argues, "*American Idol* plays by the rules of Hollywood, wherein explicitly acknowledging religion, particularly of the Fundamentalist Christian variety, is the industry's greatest taboo" (221). He describes the producers' tendency to avoid religious issues, for example barely tolerating Leesa Bellesi's ministry for Christian contestants and their families.

So which is true? Do the producers discourage, exploit, or tolerate religious expression? My close reading of the past four seasons will show that the producers do whatever suits their needs at the moment. The overall atmosphere of the show is secular, liberal, and sometimes anti-Christian, but the producers recognize the audience appeal of Christian contestants and will capitalize on that to some extent. The producers could weed out evangelicals in the early stages of competition, but they know that these contestants have been highly successful in the past. In a sense, the producers allow the contestants to challenge the secular or anti-Christian nature of the show because it pays off for them in the end, so it is important to recognize the strict limits within which contestants can speak and act. Once a contestant has established his identity as a "church kid," the judges will even police that identity and express frustration when he does something to suggest that he is being unduly influenced by Hollywood, such as dancing in an erotic way. In a series that highly values authentic identities, Christians are expected to stick to their values, even though no one acknowledges how difficult this must be in the studio environment.

In spite of everything, the fact that *American Idol* regularly features evangelical contestants who are racially and culturally diverse, relatable, and sympathetic marks its difference from many popular scripted programs. While comedies often mock characters like Ned Flanders of *The Simpsons*, Hank and Pat MacDougall of *Everybody Loves Raymond*, Mrs. Kim of *Gilmore Girls*, and Angela Martin of *The Office* for their outspoken faith and conservative approach to the Bible, Diane Winston points out that many characters on drama series since 9/11 have been shown "raising religious issues, asking ethical questions, and

experiencing spiritual insights in the course of our ongoing relationship with them” (12). This is what happens on *American Idol*, in which the audience directly affects the religious content by voting for contestants whose spiritual insights are the most appealing. This voting behavior makes the series a fascinating case study of the intersection of Christianity and culture, which I have found makes an excellent example in class discussions of television, film, and even literature.

### **“I’m Kind of Feeling Saved”**

In season nine, the series achieved the number one rating for the seventh consecutive year, with the premiere attracting just under 30 million viewers and nearly 500 million votes cast overall. This was the last year for judge Simon Cowell, the British music producer who helped launch the series, and the first and last for Ellen DeGeneres. Jennifer Reed describes Ellen as “arguably the most famous lesbian in America” due to the sit-coms and talk show in which she established herself as charming and likeable: “She is a perfect television personality. She is easily consumable, funny, and nice to be around. There seems to be nothing threatening about her” (23). Her appearance on *American Idol* provided an interesting example of the producers’ liberal political leanings and their attempts to appeal to conservative audiences by choosing a gay judge as beloved as Ellen and then avoiding any direct reference to her sexuality. This put everyone in an awkward position and revealed one of the boundaries of religious discourse on the series, which is ironic given that homosexuality and gay marriage are two of the most often debated topics in America. *Idol*’s unofficial policy has always been “don’t ask, don’t tell,” and the sexuality of gay contestants has been freely discussed in the media but was never mentioned onscreen until season twelve.

Ellen’s sexual identity was never mentioned either, but the humor did become more explicit throughout the season. The producers began by placing her in the heterosexual role of Simon’s fake love interest. In February, Ellen explained why she was not sitting next to Simon: “Simon wants me. He’s got like a thing for me.” This fake confession was followed by a video of Simon putting his hand on her leg under the table. The following week, Ellen referred to a bit on her talk show when she asked host Ryan Seacrest, “Remember when we were in the bed together?” A later episode began with Ellen sitting on Simon’s lap nuzzling his ear, then pretending to be surprised and saying, “I didn’t know we started!” However, the humor took a slight turn when Ryan joked, “I think Ellen’s taken,” the first reference to her partner. In mid-March, Ellen said to an attractive male contestant: “For most women, their hearts are gonna start racing just looking at you. But then for people like me....” The pause allowed for laughter before she continued the sentence with “blondes.” In May, Ellen responded to a performance of “Have You Ever Really Loved a Woman?” by saying, “Yes, I have loved a woman.” These teasing references are much funnier than images of her sitting on Simon’s lap, but demonstrate the limits of free

speech about religious issues. Ellen was no more free to talk about her partner than Christian contestants were free to disagree with her views.

However uncomfortable the evangelical contestants may have been with Ellen's presence on the judging panel, their greatest obstacle to winning audience support was a television culture that tends not to take evangelicals seriously. One example is a commercial for the FOX drama *House* that ran during *American Idol*. Dr. House is speed dating and sits across from a seemingly perfect woman who then declares that she is "on fire for the Lord!" The commercial ends on a close-up of House looking horrified. No verbal reaction is necessary because we assume that no normal man, let alone the cynical doctor, would be interested in a woman who talks this way. She's on fire for the Lord—end of story.

During the same week, *Idol* contestants struggled to adapt their church backgrounds to the secular competition. When the judges criticized Jermaine Sellers for changing his song too much, his protest sparked a conversation with Simon and judge Kara DioGuardi:

JERMAINE: I'm going to get y'all to come to church with me one good Sunday and hear us sing!

SIMON: I'll go to church with you.

JERMAINE: Don't play!

KARA: Really? You would?

SIMON: Yeah. Why not?

KARA: They'd let you in? Would they?

SIMON: I don't think that's church singing. You know church singing. It kinda gets you. That was just once again you did a kind of a cabaret type performance with it, which is therefore making you very old-fashioned.

This demonstrates a lack of consensus about "church singing." Is it improvisatory, emotionally affecting, or old-fashioned? Jermaine claimed that God would keep him in the competition and danced around saying, "Jesus is my homeboy," with mixed results from Kara's cheering to Simon's sarcasm, until Ryan finally said, "I've got to get this show done on time, all right? I mean we're excited about *Simon and Jermaine Go to Sunday School*, the new docu-series apparently coming." While the *House* commercial avoided dialogue between atheist and evangelical, here we see the tensions that can arise and the use of humor to diffuse them.

When the top twelve performed on the big stage, two contestants tried to bridge the gap between their church upbringings and the requirement to sing the music of the Rolling Stones. Lacey Brown's background video included a shot of Victory Church in Amarillo, Texas, while her father, the pastor, admitted that "Lacey really doesn't have a lot of experience singing outside the church." After her origins had been clearly identified, Lacey sang "Ruby Tuesday," ironically ending with the lyrics: "She would never say where she came from." Paige Miles told a similar story on her video: "My musical influences really come from my Mom. She grew up singing in the church, so I grew up singing in the church as

well.” Yet Paige performed “Honky Tonk Woman,” with lyrics like “I just can’t seem to drink you off my mind.” Neither Lacey nor Paige managed to build on their heritage in a coherent way, and they were the first two members of the top twelve to be eliminated.

No one was more successful than Crystal Bowersox at bringing church music into the Hollywood studio, possibly due to her unconventional identity as a single mother with dreadlocks and a singer-songwriter style. During the week of the *House* commercial, Crystal thrilled the judges with her rendition of “Long As I Can See the Light,” which she gave “a kind of gospeley, church spin” by using call and response with the background singers and an organ. When contestants sang Elvis songs, Crystal chose “Saved,” explaining, “I love the gospel music and blues and that’s really where my roots are so I felt like I could connect to it.” Crystal sang about how she used to lie and cheat but “Now I’m in that soul-saving army, beating on that big bass drum.” Judge Randy Jackson was inspired to use the Christian metaphor “It could have been the second coming of Bonnie Raitt” while Simon and Kara engaged in this dialogue:

SIMON: That was a lyric I could personally relate to, the lying, the cheating.

KARA: Are you saved yet? Have you been saved?

SIMON: I’m kind of feeling saved.

CRYSTAL: It says “used to,” though.

SIMON: Oh, used to.

This is not hard-hitting discussion of sin, repentance, and salvation, but the light humor may serve the same function as the humor about Ellen’s sexuality—allowing for controversial subjects to be briefly entertained. Crystal’s performance of the gospel classic “People Get Ready” ended with emotion, as she burst into tears while repeating the lyrics “You don’t need no ticket—you just thank the Lord.” When Ryan asked about her feelings, Crystal wept again as she explained, “I saw my Dad and I was like ‘Thank the Lord for my family.’” This moment of gratitude demonstrated the potential for sincere expressions of faith to be inspirational to all four judges and the viewers—who voted for Crystal yet again.

Churches also appeared in their least controversial role as sources of philanthropy and social justice. Previous evangelical winner Kris Allen visited after the earthquake in Haiti, performing “Let It Be” in front of a video of the devastated island while information about donating flashed across the bottom of the screen. This created one of the strange ideological dissonances that are so typical on the series. Is “Let It Be” the best response to an earthquake or the best way to encourage donations? The shot of a Haitian church as Kris sang, “When I find myself in times of trouble / Mother Mary comes to me” encouraged us to interpret this as a Christian appropriation of a secular song, with “Mother Mary” referring to the mother of Jesus rather than the mother of Paul McCartney, but none of this was very clear. The same tensions emerged in the lavish *Idol Gives Back* special. The attempt to raise money for the poor while entertaining viewers

led to some awkward transitions, for example from the Black Eyed Peas' performance of "Rock That Body" to a discussion of malaria. Yet Christians appeared consistently as supporters of charitable work, from the efforts of a nun named Sister Dominguez to build orphanages in Angola to Morgan Freeman's trip with Randy to Mississippi to observe the work of Save the Children. After attending a service at the Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, they visited a black family in which the oldest son had survived a serious accident. With a cross around his neck, he testified, "I thought I was going to die...but I guess God gave me a second chance." While it's easy to criticize *Idol* for presenting social problems through the lens of celebrity glamour, this episode raised over \$45 million, adding to the \$140 million raised by previous specials.

Crystal's final performance for voters, "Up to the Mountain" by Patty Griffin, included a more subtle reminder of the historical connection between evangelical churches and civil rights. The song was inspired by a speech that Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered at a church on the day before his assassination: "Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land" (525). In an echo of that 1968 moment, Crystal sang,

The peaceful valley just over the mountain,  
The peaceful valley so few come to know,  
And although I may never get there in this lifetime  
I know sooner or later, it's there I will go.

The judges loved the performance, though Crystal lost the title the following night to Lee DeWyze, a contestant who kept quiet about his religious beliefs but wore a cross around his neck throughout the season. Overall, season nine belied stereotypes by proving that a single mother could inspire the nation with Christian performances that had more in common with coffeehouse guitar-playing than with the typical worship band.

### **"Many People Live at Ebenezer Baptist"**

Some predicted that the series could not survive without Simon, but season ten surpassed expectations with popular new judges Steven Tyler and Jennifer Lopez quickly fitting into the roles of bad boy and sweetheart. One of the earliest clips previewing Steven's loveable antics was his response to an excellent audition by country singer Scotty McCreery: "Well, hellfire save matches, f--- a duck and see what hatches!" It's not surprising that the Aerosmith singer would come into conflict with evangelicals like Scotty, making this season particularly interesting from a religious perspective. When Scotty's Milwaukee audition was aired the following week, it exemplified the complex portrayal of the South on *American Idol*. The episode began with the image of a U.S. map, on which videos of auditioners from around the country were placed next to their

hometowns. The map disappeared as Ryan announced, “But the first contender of the day comes from a place far from Milwaukee. He’s the pride of Garner, North Carolina.” Shots of a town sign, church, and baseball field evoked this distant yet generic setting as Scotty claimed that “growing up in Garner’s been a great experience” yet described himself as “an all-American kid.” His performances of “Your Man” and “Put Some Drive in Your Country” inspired Steven’s often-replayed exclamation, to which Scotty graciously responded, “It ain’t nothin’ I ain’t heard at high school,” distancing himself from language that he would never use. As he left the audition with his golden ticket, Jennifer made a claim that turned out to be true: “With the right songs, we discovered him. He’s legendary.”

Lauren Alaina’s Nashville audition provides an interesting contrast, since her Georgia roots were not framed as symbolically “off the map” but as part of the fertile ground of country music heritage. Ryan introduced the segment, “Welcome back to the Ryman Auditorium here in Nashville, Tennessee, where there have been so many great country music moments here. We’re trying to keep that legacy alive.” After a video in which she turned cartwheels in an average-looking suburban front yard, Lauren’s performance led Steven to predict that she would win. Two teens with southern accents and crosses around their necks were established as appealingly Other, all-American, and part of a distinctive musical tradition invoked by the somewhat ironic use of the words “legendary” and “legacy” in relation to high school students.

Throughout the audition process, the judges accepted faith convictions if they came with talent and ethical behavior, denouncing hypocrisy, and praising strong performances based on church backgrounds. Bad singer Victoria Garrett was mocked on the soundtrack as she described God’s will for her career, but when strong singer Clint Gamboa claimed that he “grew up singing in a lot of gospel churches,” Randy advised, “Don’t lose it, whatever you do.” Unfortunately, the judges lost sympathy for Clint during Hollywood Week when he ruthlessly kicked someone out of his group against the will of Scotty McCreery, who publically apologized and cried over the incident. Eventually the judges let Clint into the top twenty-four, but they emphasized his lack of team spirit and he was cut after the first audience vote. On the other hand, Scotty’s final audition expressed his desire to avoid temptation, even inserting the word “*Idol*” into his lyrics: “Watch out, *Idol*, for that long black train. / That devil’s drivin’ that long black train.” When he apologized again for not standing up to Clint, the judges praised his character.

Meanwhile, African American gospel singer Jacob Lusk was rising to the top after his impassioned rendition of “God Bless the Child,” which Randy later called “the single best performance ever on *Idol*.” Jacob defended a more restrained later performance with “I didn’t want to take it all the way to Ebenezer Baptist on y’all,” referring to the Atlanta church where Martin Luther King, Jr. served as pastor. But Randy replied, “Many people live at Ebenezer Baptist, baby, so whatever. Do you, always do you.” The message is consistent: it’s okay to be Christian as long as you’re not a hypocrite, and especially if you come from a group like southerners or African Americans that has historical associations with Christian faith and thus adds to the series’ prized authenticity and diversity.

The first live show started with beeped-out cursing as Ryan presented Steven with an *Idol* sign to put over his mouth, but the performances soon inspired the judges to switch to Christian language. Jennifer told Scotty, “You’re born to sing country music. God blessed you with that,” and Steven commented, “Jacob Lusk. Divine intervention that brought you here.” During the results show, Stefano Langone sang “Lord I need you, I need you right away” with such passion that Randy responded, “I love that you chose that song to anoint this moment, I mean really anoint this moment.” Yet the episode also included Jennifer’s music video for “On the Floor,” with shots of women in gold bikinis representing the series’ typical portrayal of the music industry. Jacob and Scotty responded with Christian performances the following week, which gained the all-important *Idol* quality of authenticity from their links to marginalized American communities. Jacob evoked black churches in cities like his native Compton by performing “I Believe I Can Fly” with a robed African American gospel choir, and Scotty evoked the rural South as he sang “The River” with lyrics about “the good Lord as my captain” in front of river photographs on the screen.

Music producer Jimmy Iovine and the judges liked these performances but seemed to know very little about Contemporary Christian Music, instead comparing Jacob to artists of the Motown era. Tensions erupted when Jacob resisted Jimmy’s advice to perform “Let’s Get It On” because of its sexual lyrics. He switched to Michael Jackson’s secular but introspective “Man in the Mirror” and told viewers, “If I end up in the bottom three...it will be because everybody in America wasn’t ready to look at themselves in the mirror.” The judges praised the performance and what Randy called his “moral conviction.” Yet the results show, in which Jacob *was* in the bottom three, reinforced the producers’ view of entertainment in terms of sexiness and edgy behavior that challenges conventional morality. Comedian Russell Brand gave performance tips like taking your top off and not being afraid of your genitals, Gwen Stefani styled the ladies with clothes from her own wardrobe, TMZ staff made fun of them for being boring on Twitter or falling down stairs, and Iggy Pop performed “Real Wild Child” with no shirt. All of this seemed in very bad taste when the episode ended with the shocking elimination of excellent singer Pia Toscano, who sobbed as Ryan soberly reminded everyone to vote. The next week, Jimmy angrily told Jacob, “Don’t preach to people” and suggested that he sing “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” which switched the focus to a more personal statement of faith. Jacob was contrite in his interview with Ryan, juxtaposing his dependence on the audience (“I need America to cover me”) and the Lord (“There’s a greater power that’s there for me as well”). He stayed out of the bottom three.

But Jacob ran into other problems as his androgynous behavior confused his “church kid” image. He cried in rehearsal because Luther Vandross’s “Dance with my Father” reminded him of his father’s death when he was twelve, and his performance struck Randy as too restrained: “Go for it. I need the church kid back!” Somehow the sensitive soul did not go with “church kid,” or at least not black, inner-city church kid. Jacob was later mocked for wearing an outrageous outfit including a purple bow tie, yellow shirt, and blue plaid jacket. The following week, he and Lauren Alaina held photos of *Idol* winners whose songs

they were performing. Lauren identified herself with Carrie Underwood, another blonde country singer from the South, while Jacob displayed the photo of mixed-race female winner Jordin Sparks and then sang both parts of her “No Air” duet with Chris Brown, complete with gyrating hips. Randy insisted, “You’re the church kid, so to try and get out of that to go into this really pop, R&B thing, it doesn’t wear well.” He was eliminated the next night, suggesting that viewers were persuaded by Randy’s critique.

During the same episode in which Randy criticized Jacob for turning away from his church roots, Scotty found himself having to defend his faith to Steven, who responded to an up-tempo performance, “Up to now you’ve been like a Puritan, you know? But I swear to God I saw you dance with the devil tonight. And that’s a good thing for you.” Scotty held his cross backstage and said, “I don’t know, man, I love Jesus.” When guest mentor Lady Gaga advised him to stay close to the microphone in explicitly sexual terms, he responded, “I just felt like I needed to kiss my cross or something like that and just say ‘Lord, this is not my doing.’” Lady Gaga also admonished Lauren when she worried about singing the word “evil” in her Elvis song, “Listen, you’re not a kid, you’re sixteen” and “At the end of the day, the word ‘evil’ is not that big a deal, is it?” Jimmy praised Gaga’s ability to relate to young girls’ insecurities and called her “a good role model in this area,” not acknowledging the moral struggles of both teens. Despite this privileging of the Gaga style of musical celebrity, the voting audience placed Scotty and Lauren in the finale.

This season did not include an *Idol Gives Back* special, but there was no shortage of philanthropic efforts awkwardly joined to entertainment. Before the top twelve performed, the judges announced that their prayers went out to those affected by the earthquake in Japan and that viewers could download the night’s songs with proceeds going to the American Red Cross. The following night, the Black Eyed Peas dedicated their performance of “Just Can’t Get Enough” to the people of Japan, although the lyrics seem incongruous: “My mind’s dirty and it don’t need cleaning.” In the finale, the one act devoted to philanthropy took place between Judas Priest’s performance of “Breaking the Law” and Jack Black’s tribute to “Fat Bottomed Girls.” It is not surprising that Jacob was the one pressed into charitable service, paired with gospel singers Kirk Franklin and Gladys Knight to sing Franklin’s “I Smile” while onscreen text prompted viewers to make a donation for disaster relief. Much more hype was given to Lady Gaga’s sensual performance of “The Edge of Glory” in a bikini with a large cross necklace. After Lauren and Scotty presented gifts to their favorite high school teachers, Ryan introduced Gaga, “This season she’s had a huge impact as a mentor and tonight she teaches us all about star power.” But when Ryan announced that Scotty was the winner, he attributed his success to a very different source: “I’ve got to thank the Lord first. He got me here.” Season ten added a new type of Christian celebrity to the *Idol* alumni, the squeaky-clean southern boy whose country music would focus on God and family rather than sex and guns.

### “The Doors of the Church Are Wide Open!”

Randy, Steven, and Jennifer returned for season eleven, in which churches often appeared as sources of cultural and musical heritage. More than in previous seasons, however, there were examples of *disconnect* between church background and current identity. The most scandalous incident involved Jermaine Jones, whose Christian faith was often featured until he had to be eliminated when the producers found out that he was wanted by the police. Equally interesting was the story of zany street musician Creighton Fraker, who was adopted as a baby and “grew up as a preacher’s kid, singing church music,” but couldn’t explain his love for rock-and-roll until he learned that his birth father was in a heavy metal band. His birth father was featured on the show, supporting him after his auditions. The implication is that blood is thicker than water—his church background didn’t stick because heavy metal was his true heritage. Yet an incident with Jimmy Iovine suggested that church experiences remain influential even when they have been rejected. Jimmy claimed a personal connection to Billy Joel’s “Only the Good Die Young” because “when we walk into the whole repressed Catholic thing, that’s my area.” He added that Jennifer would get the song because “she’s a Catholic girl.” Jimmy and Jennifer do not appear to be practicing Catholics, but he believes that their past helps them relate to certain songs.

While these incidents prove that a church upbringing doesn’t always lead to an adult Christian lifestyle, Joshua Ledet easily fit the *Idol* narrative of the African American preacher’s son who becomes a gospel star. Joshua’s contagious enthusiasm often inspired the judges to engage in improvisatory call and response that hearkens back to his and Randy’s home state of Louisiana. When Joshua made the top twenty-four, Randy sang “Can I get an Amen?” and Jennifer sang “I’m blessed, I’m blessed.” When Joshua sang Jennifer Hudson’s “You Pulled Me Through” during a live show, Randy shouted, “Can I get an Amen up in here?” The crowd responded and he continued, “The doors of the church are wide open!” During the results show after a replay of this moment, Jimmy sounded a note of warning: “It’s my job to make sure that we don’t turn this into *Sister Act III*.” It may be fun to turn the studio audience into a church congregation for a few minutes, but there’s a limit before it becomes too much for the music industry’s chief onscreen representative.

Joshua worked hard to find songs in the required categories that would match his stated desire to “minister through my music.” He struggled with his Stevie Wonder song until mentor Mary J. Blige brought in a music producer with a church background: “When Eric began to play the piano, Joshua would hop right in, because that’s where they come from, and it all snapped.” When the theme was “Songs from the Year They Were Born,” the producers highlighted Joshua’s southern heritage by having him demonstrate how to eat crawfish. In his background video, his parents appeared to be sitting in a church for their interview. Though he chose a secular song, “When a Man Loves a Woman,” mentor will.i.am responded, “I just got flashbacks of my Mom pinching me,

telling me to be still in church.” When Joshua explained that his father is a pastor, will.i.am agreed: “You sound like your dad’s a pastor.” A “natural” connection is made between Louisiana heritage and gospel style, making it easy to forget that South Dakota pastor’s son Creighton Fraker sounded nothing like this.

Week after week, the judges gave Joshua standing ovations and adopted Christian phrases, like this from Jennifer: “Ask and you shall receive. That’s what they say, right?” On video and in the studio, Joshua emphasized his homesickness and his desire not to stray from his small-town past. After he performed “Run Away Baby” with a sexy background dancer, Ryan brought his father onstage and asked if he approved. Pastor Ledet simply answered, “I reckon.” No need to worry. Joshua hearkened back to previous eras with his swing bands and flowers in the lapels of his fitted suits. After his performance of a James Brown song, Jennifer said, “I had never known what it meant when somebody said ‘take you to church’...but I actually went to church.” Ryan said, “You found religion now,” and she responded, “I did! I saw the Lord!” Even Jimmy praised Joshua’s growling because “it sounded like he was speaking in tongues.” While there are no genuine conversion experiences going on here, it is refreshing to hear evangelical churches being portrayed as exciting and desirable.

When Joshua went to Westlake, Louisiana, for his hometown visit, “Son of a Preacher Man” played on the soundtrack as he took the audience to church, literally, this time. The establishing shot showed a very small church that was nearly covered up when the *Idol* limousine pulled in front of it. People laid hands on Joshua and prayed for him, leading him to reflect on how he felt grounded. Yet that night on the show, he sang “Imagine,” which has an anti-Christian message: “Imagine there’s no heaven. It’s easy if you try. / No hell below us, above us only sky. / Imagine all the people living for today.” The judges didn’t notice a discrepancy between the church scene and these lyrics, with Jennifer saying, “It’s almost like you’re preaching while you’re singing.” Like Kris Allen’s choice of “Let It Be” for the charity segment in season nine, this proved that people have the tendency to ignore the words of Beatles songs. Joshua made it to third place and sang with Fantasia Barrino during the finale, ending his *Idol* run as one of its most successful gospel contestants.

The most unique Christian finalist was Colton Dixon, whose Mohawk and love for punk rock disguised his evangelical identity until the top ten. After his performance of “Piano Man,” there was a shot of a poster in the crowd with a cross and the words “The Dixon Messengers John 13:16.” Few viewers would notice the poster or recognize the verse: “Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them” (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*). Ironically, a similar poster was visible behind Randy as he said that Colton was definitely a rock star: “Stay individual! Be an individual!” Audience members chanted his name and girls screamed as Colton told Ryan, “I’ve been praying before this whole thing because tonight was a big moment for me. I was just collecting myself and saying, ‘God, use me.’ I want Him to shine through first and foremost.” The audience continued to go crazy, perhaps without recognizing that Colton was trying to change his identity from rock star to messenger of Christ.

The following week, Colton chose a worship song, Lifehouse's "Everything." In his video, he wore a T-shirt that said "Not of this world" as he explained, "A lot of people say that they found music, but music really found me through church." Mentor Stevie Nicks seemed to interpret this as a secular love song, and the lyrics that he sang during the live show are not explicitly Christian, with the chorus repeating "You're all I want, you're all I need, you're everything." Yet Randy compared Colton to Christian alternative rock bands Mutemath and Switchfoot in a rare reference to current Christian music: "You honestly don't hide it. You just lay it all out there and say 'Hey, world, here I am. Here's what I do.'" Although Colton did refer to this as a worship song and knelt down at the end, the Christian references are more subtle than Randy indicated. Since Randy knew the song, he probably understood its religious significance better than others in the audience. After Colton was eliminated in seventh place, he reprised this song and changed one set of lyrics to "He's all I want, He's all I need."

While the season eleven contestants did not openly resist the producers, they provided alternatives to the explicitly sexual performances by guest artists like current judge Jennifer Lopez and future judge Nicki Minaj. On the same night that Nicki performed "Starships" in a top that barely covered her breasts, Scotty McCreery performed his hit "Water Tower Town," in which "church doors are the only thing that's open on Sundays" and "nobody eats 'til you say Amen." Jimmy presented him with a plaque for his platinum album, a reminder that this kind of music can be successful in the marketplace. Season eleven once again challenged the Christian musician stereotype, with Colton showing a faith as genuine as that of Crystal, Scotty, or Joshua despite Randy's description of him as "our own little indie alt rocker."

### **"I Feel Thoroughly Cleansed of My Sins"**

Season twelve brought new judges Keith Urban, Nicki Minaj, and Mariah Carey, along with a slight departure from "don't ask, don't tell" with the inclusion of two openly gay contestants, although neither of them made the top twenty. Papa Peachez auditioned with an original song that included the lyrics: "I may be gay but that's okay." The producers chose to include this, maybe seeing it as a safe way to introduce an openly gay contestant since he was not subject to an audience vote and he ended up being eliminated during Hollywood Week. Cross-dresser Jda performed in Las Vegas wearing high heels and glittering jewelry. When Nicki said, "Work it, girl!" he responded, "I gotta represent for the gays," another comment that the producers chose to leave in the broadcast. The judges made it clear that they liked Jda's performance style, but they had to eliminate him based on his singing.

The most interesting aspect of season twelve from a Christian perspective was the contrast between the judges' responses to black finalist Curtis Finch, Jr., and white finalist Angie Miller. Curtis fit into the niche created by Jacob Lusk and Joshua Ledet, and judges seem to be comfortable with black Christianity

since it is linked to cultural heritage rather than to doctrines that are either true or false. Yet Curtis's early elimination exposed some of the ways in which a black gospel singer can fail to meet unstated expectations. His background video used the familiar rhetoric of heritage: "I was raised in a church and my family sang gospel music, and so gospel music is in my blood." Like many contestants before him, Curtis represented religion as a family trait rather than the personal commitment that evangelicals typically emphasize. When he performed the secular love song "Superstar," Keith responded with an approximation of evangelical language: "Preach on, brother Curtis. I feel thoroughly cleansed of my sins. Well, not thoroughly, but I thought that was really beautiful." However, Keith also advised him not to over-perform. Curtis was in danger of coming across as cheesy, with his wide grin, theatrical style, and clichéd evangelical gestures like pointing up to God.

Ryan introduced Curtis during the top twenty performance as "our worship leader," indicating that he was filling an established role on the series. The drawback is that this role can become overly predictable, especially since Curtis sang "I Believe I Can Fly," which Jacob had performed in season ten. The judges did not sense a problem and gave him a standing ovation. Keith gushed that "we just had us a sermon in Vegas," Nicki claimed that his talent was given by "a higher power," Randy began "Let's all just say 'Praise God,'" and Mariah liked that he added the words "with God, I can fly." But the problem with Curtis's recycling of familiar songs became clear during his next and last performance for voters. He sang "I Believe," which had been performed on *Idol* by both Fantasia and Joshua. Jimmy warned him not to get caught up in the past, but his performance with the choir closely resembled the clip of Fantasia. Randy cautioned him, "It's always these kinds of things that you sing. They're inspirational, they're great, but I feel like I'm not seeing anything new." He was eliminated in tenth place, leading viewers to wonder where he went wrong. Besides the fact that he seemed less original than Jacob or Joshua, it's possible that voters remembered his lack of compassion to a sick group member back in Hollywood Week: "I'm here to send him home in the first place, so I'll help him pack and escort him to the shuttle to the airport. If all else fails, I just worry about myself." Another problem may have been his bright red paisley blazer, which was featured in a humorous video during the finale as the cause of his early elimination. This echoes the downfall of Jacob, whose brightly colored outfit disrupted the judges' stereotypical view of him as an inner-city church kid. The role of "our worship leader" is not as stable as it seems.

Angie Miller, a white teenager from Massachusetts who wore black leather and high heels, did not fit the judges' preconceived notion of a Christian and they did not respond to her in those terms. She got their attention during Hollywood Week with her original song "You Set Me Free," with its subtle lyrics about God's protection:

You find me here alone.  
I hear a voice that's so unknown.  
It strikes courage up my backbone,

Strength in my heart, a life set apart.  
I see that's what you are.

The judges gave her a standing ovation and focused on the song's popular appeal, with Keith saying, "I would play that in my car" and Nicki adding "That's a top forty song right now." For her top twenty performance, Angie again signaled her interest in Christian music by choosing Colton Dixon's "Never Gone." The judges did not refer to religion, unless we count Nicki's biblical compliment, "The trumpets should sound when you walk in a room." Ryan told her that Colton was watching, so Angie waved at the camera and said hello to him, a moment of call and response between two Christian contestants that is more subtle than a judge yelling, "Can I get an Amen?" The fact that the judges used that language for black gospel singers but not for Colton or Angie indicates the extent to which their view of faith is tied to ethnicity and region, as if churches do not exist in Angie's hometown of Beverly, Massachusetts, as well as in the South. Neither Angie's background video nor the footage of her hometown visit mentioned that her father is a pastor ("Angie Miller's Parents").

Yet Angie was criticized when she danced flirtatiously during her Motown song "Shop Around." Nicki argued that she didn't need to be sexy, and Mariah unexpectedly said, "I know you come from a faith-based background and I love when you sing songs that have a bit of that in it, because I feel you're immersed in the song." As we saw with Jacob, the judges may not share a contestant's faith, but they criticize any departure from it as a betrayal of authenticity. Angie received much better feedback when she performed "Love Came Down" by Christian singer Kari Jobe, with Randy saying that he loved it "because I know that's who you are." This feedback is ironic in light of the finale. Rather than pairing Angie with another Christian like Joshua or Colton, the producers arranged for her to sing duets with rock singers Adam Lambert and Jessie J, who often discuss their gay and bisexual identities in the media. For example, Adam told *Rolling Stone* that he is proud to be gay ("The Liberation of Adam Lambert"), and Jessie told *Glamour* that she doesn't hide her bisexuality: "You should never, ever apologize for anything that makes you happy" (Brown). By placing Angie in this context, the producers began to market her as an edgy, non-conformist rocker. After the duets, Jessie J offered to collaborate with Angie on a performance of "You Set Me Free," which would neutralize its Christian message and potentially reframe it as a song about gay rights or simply "tolerance." Angie clearly admires Jessie J and sang her songs on *Idol*, but it must be noted that the producers placed Angie's first single in a secular context, regardless of the judges' claims that she should not stray from her faith background.

Despite the ambivalence about faith on *American Idol*, season twelve did include a segment that recognized Contemporary Christian Music as a viable market. The episode that aired on Holy Thursday included a video update on Colton, including the fact that his album *A Messenger* "debuted at number one on both the Christian and gospel *Billboard* charts, making him the highest selling new solo Christian artist in SoundScan history." A shot of the Christian albums chart showed Colton appearing above Chris Tomlin, Casting Crowns, and

TobyMac, and Ryan announced that he was on tour with Third Day. Colton then performed “Love Has Come for Me,” with a message about sin that was very appropriate for the evening before Good Friday. This was a welcome acknowledgement of the success of *Idol* alumni in the Christian music industry. In fact, the finale suggested that winner Candice Glover may be taking her career in a Christian direction. Since she fits easily into the gospel category as an African American from rural South Carolina, Randy often spoke of her church background, although she did not. During the last moments of the finale, she sang her single “I Am Beautiful,” which includes the words “I’m worth every tear and every scar.” Whatever happens in the careers of Angie and Candice, season twelve contributed to the diversity of Christian musicians on the series, reminding millions of Americans that not all evangelicals look or sound alike.

### Conclusion: Negotiating Evangelical Identity in a Post-Christian World

How does *American Idol* succeed in bringing large audiences to network television in the twenty-first century? Part of the answer lies in its ability to withstand criticism from all sides, including those who have benefited from its spotlight. Evangelical contestants have gone on to release songs which question the show’s basic premises that pop musicians deserve to be idolized and that fame and fortune are the ultimate goals in life. In “Empty Me,” Chris Sligh describes the process of rededicating himself to Christian values after leaving the show:

I’ve tasted my share of the sweet life and the wild ride  
And found a little is not quite enough.  
I know how I can stray  
And how fast my heart could change.  
Empty me of the selfishness inside  
Every vain ambition and the poison of my pride....

Yet evangelicals continue to audition each year, and criticism from past contestants appears on Christian radio alongside updates about which of the top twelve are believers. That’s what makes *American Idol* so fascinating as a platform for competing ideologies in a nation where conservative churchgoers and promoters of gay marriage have few opportunities for dialogue.

Of course, *Idol* also exemplifies one of the biggest challenges faced by Christians in America today. Evangelicals are defined by their desire to spread the gospel and to speak openly about their faith, which is made possible by America’s cherished notion of free speech and tolerance of various viewpoints. However, this atmosphere makes it difficult to present anything as the *truth* rather than just another opinion that many non-believers can easily assimilate into the multicultural mosaic that includes Crystal Bowersox and Ellen DeGeneres, Scotty McCreery and Lady Gaga, Joshua Ledet and Jennifer Lopez, Angie Miller and Nicki Minaj. Most viewers probably do not dwell on the real differences in the values represented by these performers, since everyone seems to get along so

well. Yet the evangelical contestants should be admired for expressing their faith with boldness in a very challenging environment, allowing the audience to be exposed to Christians who are sympathetic and likeable. If we are frustrated by the many limitations of *American Idol*, it may inspire those of us who are educators to make the best use of our classrooms, with their much greater potential for the exchange of ideas about religion and identity.

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## When Confucius Greets Socrates: Teaching American Law in an Asian University<sup>1</sup>

Cordell P. Schulten

### Introduction

Nearly ten years ago, I presented a paper in the United States at an academic symposium. I was addressing a group of legal scholars on the subject of recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions in cases involving capital punishment. I was not aware, however, that in my audience were two professors from the faculty of Handong Global University located in South Korea. After my presentation, those Korean professors introduced themselves and invited me to their university's recently established graduate law school to serve as a visiting professor teaching U.S. Antitrust law for a short term the following summer. I accepted their invitation and traveled to East Asia for the first time in July 2004. That experience led to my subsequent return to Handong in the fall of 2009 and my eventual appointment to the university's faculty of law, where I have been teaching in Handong's U.S. and International Law program of study. I am now in the midst of my eighth semester of teaching American law in an Asian university.

Through my teaching experiences over this period, I have encountered much of what Professor Jasper Kim of Ehwa University described in his article entitled "Socrates vs. Confucius: An Analysis of South Korea's Implementation of the American Law School Model," published in the *Asian-Pacific Law & Policy Journal* in 2009. There, Professor Kim addressed the question "Socrates vs. Confucius: Clash or Co-existence?" (323). His inquiry was focused upon South Korea's Graduate Law School Act of 2007 by which Korea has transitioned from an undergraduate legal education system to a program of study modeled along the lines of the three-year graduate, professional law school program in the United States (323).

Professor Kim identified both cultural constraints and language barriers to the successful co-existence of a Socratic-styled Western legal educational approach within the Confucian context in which Korean legal education, both substantively and methodologically, is located. With respect to cultural constraints, Professor Kim observed,

Korean culture is predominantly predicated on social inequality while American culture is predicated on equality, and accordingly the American law school system is largely predicated on the use of the Socratic method [*s/c*] rather than the South Korean Confucian-based top-down lecture method. Thus, a fundamental mismatch

may exist in the short-run when applying the American law school model to the Korean case. (349)

With regard to language barriers, Professor Kim noted that the English language embodies the fundamental notion of equality and thus it is “relatively non-hierarchical and flat” when contrasted with the Korean language (349). As a result, he predicted that there would be contentious and less peaceful co-existence between Socrates and Confucius, at least in the first stages of Korea’s implementation of the American model of legal education.

While readily acknowledging the accuracy of most of Professor Kim’s analysis, as well as the validity of nearly all his conclusions, I come today to the question of Confucius’ encounter with Socrates in the arena of legal education both with a different perspective and with a distinct task. Rather than expanding upon an evaluation of attempts to teach Asian Law through a Western educational model, I will attempt to assess the experiences of a Westerner teaching American law in an Asian university through a Christian theological lens, confessing that teaching and learning are avenues for expression and formation of humans being created *Imago Dei*. Based upon this analysis, I will suggest in this paper that Socrates may indeed not only co-exist with Confucius, but also that their relationship has the potential to produce a mutually thriving learning environment. This may occur when Confucius greets Socrates and together they learn from one another how better to relate to their students, to improve their pedagogy, and to envision and achieve their learning objectives.

### Theological Foundation

Before assessing either the cultural perspectives on or the practices of teaching and learning, we must clearly articulate a theological foundation upon which Christian scholars may ground their inquiries and analyses. If it is to be a Christian foundation, it must begin with the first article of confession of the historic creeds: “I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” Since all that is in the universe was made by him, everything in creation is a means of revealing him. King David exclaimed in Psalm 19,

The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.

Because God is the creator of all that is, all that is—every subject of inquiry and learning, each topic of explanation and teaching—is thus, at its most fundamental level, an inquiry into the person of God and a means of learning about him—coming to know him. As Francis Schaeffer so succinctly expressed, “He is there

and he is not silent.” God reveals himself. He speaks about himself through all that he has made.

However, not only is the universe as a whole a means of general revelation about God. His creation of human beings *Imago Dei* is also a special means of his expression. Everyday human activities are a reflection of God’s image. Now, as confessional Christians, we must acknowledge that the consequence of human rebellion against God—Man’s Fall—has fractured and impaired human reflection of *Imago Dei*—but *Imago Dei* still remains an essential distinguishing characteristic of what it is to be human. As *Imago Dei* thus remains a reality of human existence, human activities, such as teaching and learning, are capable of apprehending and expressing truth through both God’s general revelation and as a process of human reason.

For example, since Lao Tzu was created *Imago Dei*, we may read and listen to him with the expectation of the possibility of learning truth. When we do so, we discover that he wrote,

For all things there is a time for going  
ahead, and a time for following behind;  
A time for slow-breathing and a time for fast-breathing;  
A time to grow in strength and a time to decay;  
A time to be up and a time to be down.

(*Tao Teh Ching*, § 29)

Lao Tzu’s words resonate with truth to the Christian who has been taught by the Preacher of Ecclesiastes. Yet, one might equally say that Solomon’s words in Ecclesiastes, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...,” resound with truth to the Taoist who is schooled in the *Tao Teh Ching*. Here we have prime evidence in support of the proposition advanced by George MacDonald, whose words so influenced C.S. Lewis, namely, “Truth is truth, whether from the lips of Jesus or Balaam.” Or, as Augustine is often quoted as saying, “All truth is God’s truth” (*On Christian Teaching* II.75).

Indeed, one of the best examples in Scripture of this truth being put into practice is found in the account of Paul on Mars Hill in the city of Athens. After spending time observing the places of worship throughout the city, Paul engaged the Areopagites with these words:

Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.  
(Acts 17:22-23 ESV)

In support of his efforts at Athens to tell the Greeks about the God who was “unknown” to them, Paul did not marshal the specific revelation of the Hebrew Scriptures, as he had in the synagogue of Pisidia years before when he gave his first sermon to a predominantly Jewish audience; nor did he appeal to the general

revelation of God's might and power displayed through the natural creation, as he had done in the opening lines of his most theologically astute letter to the Romans. Rather, Paul quoted the Greeks' own poets and philosophers to demonstrate that the unknown God had indeed made himself known so that they "should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being';... 'For we are indeed his offspring'" (Acts 17:27-28 ESV).

And, just as Paul, a Jewish scholar, studied the philosophy and poetry of the Greeks, so should an American professor inquire into Asian philosophy and practices of teaching and learning to more fully appreciate and progress in an educational endeavor aimed at whole-person formation. With this theological foundation laid, we may now examine more specifically how East and West may not only inform one another in this endeavor, but also enhance each other by balancing differing perspectives—when Confucius greets Socrates.

### Professor-Student Relationship

The first way in which Confucius may welcome Socrates is in the understanding of the relationship between professor and students. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus upon just two aspects: attitude and engagement. Both the Confucian hierarchical and the Socratic equalitarian character of this relationship are founded upon and fostered by an attitude of respect. In the Asian context, it is an immediate, one might say innate, respect owed to the professor by the students due to the professor's status as a teacher. In contrast, respect in a Western law school setting is initiated by the professor's addressing his or her students by their surnames. This is exemplified in the popular film *The Paper Chase*. The opening scene depicts the first day of class for first-year students at Harvard Law School. Professor Kingsfield calls upon Mr. Hart, not James or even James Hart, but Mr. Hart, to recite the facts of the first case. American law students have entered the professional arena by earning admission to law school, and professional courtesy is practiced by the law professor's attitude of respect for his students. I have found that addressing my law students at Handong by their family names—Ms. Park, Mr. Han—fosters an authenticity of respect that is sometimes lacking when the respect is merely culturally conditioned.

Furthermore, mutuality of respect between professor and students engenders a greater openness to engagement by the students in the subject matter of the day's class. Student engagement emerges beyond respectful, passive listening and vigorous note-taking, characteristic of the Confucian learning tradition, to a more active willingness to pose questions, not only privately to the professor, but even publicly in the midst of the other students. To draw students into this more active engagement, I have found that it was necessary for me to reiterate regularly both my willingness to be interrupted by questions and my approval of students who ask questions during class as those who are indeed listening carefully and wanting to know and understand the subject matter more thoroughly.

## Teaching Methodology

An integrated Confucian-Socratesian attitude of respect in the relationship between professor and students flows naturally into the forming of a balanced pedagogy. Both Confucian and Socratesian teaching methodologies are in their essential form founded upon the pondering of a text through the aid of guided inquiry. The Socratic Method that is virtually synonymous with Western legal education, however, turns the approach away from the professor's thoughts on the text of the case under consideration to the students' thinking about the facts, issues, rules, and rationales of the case. The students' thinking is guided by the professor's queries. A student's response to the professor's opening question will lead to another question from the professor, the reply to which will provide the basis for yet another question, and so goes the interaction within the Socratic classroom.<sup>2</sup>

Through Socratic engagement, the professor seeks to hone the students' thinking skills more than he or she attempts to convey substantive knowledge. Once the students' initial hesitancy to respond is overcome by the professor's openness to their efforts, and once the students' reluctance to speak up due to a lack of confidence in his or her language skills is relieved by the professor's acceptance of their attempts, the Socratic Method may be effectively used to heighten the Asian law students' active engagement in the learning endeavor. Indeed, the Confucian methodology that seeks to evoke reflection upon the text may be enhanced as the professor incorporates the Socratesian pedagogy by framing inquiries with a more artful aim and in more inviting tones. In this way, Confucius greets and invites Socrates into the *seowon*,<sup>3</sup> thus moving toward a merger and balancing of Eastern and Western academies.

A balancing approach to pedagogy is especially instructive when we examine the role of speaking in teaching and learning. To begin this analysis, we may posit three levels of engagement through speaking within a communal learning environment. The first and most basic role for speaking here is discussion—the free sharing of ideas and perspectives, the aim of which is to *observe* the variety of facets any given subject of inquiry may evoke. Within this model, lecture may be viewed as one element of discussion. From the Western tradition, the emphasis at this initial level is clear expression of ideas. From the East, I would suggest that there is an expectation at this beginning point of greater enlightenment through first embodying the idea into lived expression in being before an attempt is made to express the idea in words. Professor Jin Li, in her comprehensive work on cultural foundations of learning, has observed that Confucianism, as well as the two other major spiritual traditions in the East, Taoism and Buddhism, de-emphasizes the role of speaking (Li 296). Indeed, one of the most well-known maxims of Lao Tzu is this: “Those who understand are not talkers; talkers don't understand.” Yet all three Eastern traditions flow from the recorded words of their founders—the *Tao Teh Ching* of Lao Tzu, the *Sayings*

of the Buddha, and the *Analects* of Confucius—upon all of which their followers reflect.

From discussion, we move to the next level of learning engagement through speaking: dialogue. Whereas observation is the principal aim of discussion, dialogue is directed toward *understanding*. From the Socratic perspective, greater understanding is achieved through inquiry—those well-formulated questions we spoke of before and that build upon the responses to prior inquiries and target a more thorough and systematic comprehension of the seminal ideas and perspectives expressed at the initial discussion level. From the Confucian approach, on the other hand, greater understanding is achieved, not so much by externalized inquiry, but rather, by internalized reflection. Professor Li’s analysis of the *Analects* reveals “a rich discussion on the relationship between one’s speaking and moral/virtuous development” (297). Thus, for Confucius, “[f]ewer words are best” and “deeds shall exceed words.” True understanding is demonstrated by embodiment into being rather than eloquent appeals to good.

From discussion that allows for broad observation of ideas, and through dialogue that enables thorough understanding of those ideas, we arrive at the third level in the role of speaking in the learning endeavor: disputation. Here, the purpose of speaking is to *evaluate* the worth of an idea in relation to its formative value. From the West, Socratic dialogue progresses into Aristotelian debate—from seeking to inform to attempting to persuade with all the means Aristotle’s *Art of Rhetoric* places at the speaker’s disposal—*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. This Western effort to persuade through disputation is once again balanced by the Eastern emphasis upon doing before speaking. The full integration through balancing East and West is succinctly expressed in the depiction of the post-Exilic Jewish rabbi Ezra about whom we read, “had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel” (Ezra 7:10 ESV). Thus, the role of speaking, while essential in the teaching experience, is practiced not as mere words in a lecture, but as ideas that have first been embodied into life and then articulated for observation, understanding, and evaluation by all participants in the community of learning.

### Learning Outcomes

An integrated Confucian-Socratesian characterization of the professor-student relationship founded upon respect, along with a similarly balanced pedagogy that encourages thoughtful and thorough engagement of all levels of the learning endeavor, naturally emerges into and culminates in learning outcomes that are focused upon whole-person formation of students. The transformation of legal educational objectives that was engendered by the adoption of the Socratic-case study approach at the “High Citadel” of Harvard Law School at the turn of the twentieth century marked the move from merely “learning the law” to the ultimate goal of producing graduates who were “thinking like a lawyer.”<sup>4</sup>

Sharpening legal practitioners' critical thinking skills and argumentative tactics did not, however, fully form a professional with a developed sense of responsibility and ethics. As a result, most law schools in America included in their curriculum required courses in professional responsibility and humanities. During my law school days at Saint Louis University, I met the humanities requirement by taking a seminar examining the inter-relationship of law and religion. Some law schools in the States, most notably Yale Law School, went so far as to develop an entire course on the "formation of the lawyer," and also offered a dual-degree program in cooperation with the university's Divinity School, which enabled the student to earn both a Juris Doctorate and a Masters of Divinity degree during five years of study.

What Western, Socratic legal education realized as a need was, in fact, an outcome that the Confucian educational tradition always embodied—the formation of a whole person. These "learning virtues" of the East are thoroughly examined through the work of Professor Jin Li in her book *Cultural Foundations of Education: East and West*. Professor Li's study concluded, among other things, that

Westerners tend to define learning cognitively while Asians tend to define it morally. Westerners tend to see learning as something people do in order to understand and master the external world. Asians tend to see learning as an arduous process they undertake in order to cultivate virtues inside the self. (37)

Here again, the integration achieved by Confucius welcoming Socrates, East greeting West, and Socrates, in turn, appreciating and learning from Confucius yields both a fuller and deeper commitment to educational outcomes. They aim not only at finely honed analytical skills and argumentative strategies, but also at a developed sense of professional responsibility and ethical alertness, which will enable the law school graduate to think like a lawyer and to act like an attorney. The outcomes of individual courses of study, as well as the entire educational endeavor, are thus envisioned in terms of forming a whole person capable of ably engaging the external demands and challenges of a life well-lived with ethical integrity.

## Conclusion

When Confucius greets Socrates and both value and learn from one another, professors from each of these respective learning traditions may grow into better relationships with one another and with their students in several respects. First, the relationships they build together within the community of learning will be based upon mutual respect. Students from the Confucian tradition will help their fellow students from the West grow in respect for their professors. Professors from the Socratic tradition can equally assist their colleagues from the East in appreciating the diverse contributions their students

can make to the learning community. Together then professors and students from East and West will grow in their relationships through mutual respect and appreciation.

Professors who have been shaped by the Confucian approach to teaching may improve their pedagogy by engaging their students in reflection upon the legal text through Socratic open, guided inquiries that sharpen the students' approach to thinking about the law. Socratic professors may, on balance, develop more carefully crafted questions for their students as Western professors learn from the Confucian example of brevity and precision in word choice. More thoughtfully composed queries will draw students from both East and West into a deeper engagement of the learning endeavor as professors guide their students from basic observations into more comprehensive understanding of the issues. Having taken the time to seek such understanding, students will ultimately be equipped to make well-balanced evaluations of both ideas and actions to address the complexity of issues presented to them.

Finally, Confucius and Socrates help professors as a whole to envision and achieve learning outcomes that more fully form competent and responsible persons. Western emphasis on intellectual acuteness is balanced by the priority attached to the internal formation of character of the East. Thus, integration of the Confucian and Socratic approaches has the potential to foster a thriving formative influence within the teaching and learning environment. I have found this to be the case in my experience teaching American law in an Asian university.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> With grateful appreciation to Park Dam, LLB, *summa cum laude*, Handong University, 2013, for her excellent research and editorial assistance and to Han Boyeon for her insightful review, thoughtful comments, and probing questions.

<sup>2</sup> For a further elucidation of this correspondence, I recommend Warwick University Professor Abdul Paliwala's article, "Socrates and Confucius: A Long History of Information Technology in Legal Education," published in 2010.

<sup>3</sup> *Seowon* refers to private Confucian academies during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897).

<sup>4</sup> This momentous shift in American legal education was thoroughly analyzed by Michigan Law Professor Joel Seligman in his 1978 book, *The High Citadel: The Influence of Harvard Law School*.

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## Thoughts and Reflections

### Welcoming the Stranger: A Theological Reflection on Diversity and the Christian Faith

C. Clark Triplett

In his thought-provoking book *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (1996), Yale theologian Miroslav Volf argues that the Christian concern for others, particularly strangers and “outsiders,” is rooted in the *theologia crucis* (“theology of the cross”). The event of the cross places a radical obligation upon those who are followers of Christ to engage in “self-donation” or self-giving. The “Gifting God” acts in solidarity with the victims of evil and oppression in the self-giving death of Christ by not only “suffering with” but “struggling on the side of” those who have been marginalized or cast aside. Perhaps even more radically, God has acted on behalf of the “perpetrators” of violence and evil through the atonement to bring reconciliation and receive them into the communion of God’s kingdom. So divine self-giving is provided under the conditions of enmity; that is, the love of God is given in the context of hatred and violence. The scandal of the cross is that the love that is extended is not always reciprocated, and the suffering and violence continue. Yet God calls his people to remain faithful because in the scandal there is also a promise:

In serving and giving themselves for others (Mark 10:45), in lamenting and protesting before the dark face of God (15:34), they [disciples] found themselves in the company of the Crucified. In his empty tomb they saw the proof that the cry of desperation will turn into a song of joy and that the face of God will eventually ‘shine’ upon a redeemed world. (Volf 27)

The way of the cross is a message of welcome, but those who follow Christ also realistically recognize that God’s matchless love will continue to be met with hostility and exploitation.

### Diversity and the Hermeneutics of Difference

The theological significance of diversity, as previously indicated, is rooted in the doctrine of grace. For the Christian, there is a deep awareness of a time of

alienation and separation from God, of being on the outside and without hope. This is the subjective location for perceiving the importance of diversity in a life of faith. Anthony Thiselton examines this notion in the hermeneutics of Ormond Rush: “Openness to *the other* together with the importance of questions and of ‘differentiation’ derives from the given of Divine Alterity” (102). There is a two-fold otherness in man’s separation from God: the otherness of God and the otherness of suffering, hostility, and marginalization in human nature. Understanding the other requires an attitude or position of openness that allows for the transformation of the self. This is not always easy for American Christians in particular because of the exaggerated focus on individualism and the autonomy of the self. The hermeneutic of difference or alterity, however, expects to be surprised by something novel and strange which will change the world as previously experienced. This is the wonder of the gift of grace that brings new horizons of expectation. The strangeness of God’s love is His willingness to grant unmerited favor despite the brokenness and hostility of humanity. The attitude of humility and deference, based on the receipt of an unexpected gift, is paramount in acknowledging the world of the other. It means understanding the other through their eyes rather than the aperture of the self. Paradoxically, it is often in the process of understanding the other that change occurs in the self. As Thiselton indicates, “[I]t is whatever confronts us as most strange, adversarial, challenging, or provocative that encounters us with the most creative, formative, transformative, and life-changing effects” (101). The task of understanding the other is personally, socially, and spiritually formative in that it reshapes and re-aligns the orientation of those who engage in what may seem to be risky steps. In one sense, it is the essence of true spirituality, a re-orientation to God, self, and the world: *coram deo, cum hominibus, in mundo* (“before the face of God, with man, in the world”).

### Diversity as a Way of Creating Space for Others

Unfortunately, the faithful have not always been consistent in extending this cruciform pattern of God’s love beyond the confines of their own cultural bastions. Instead of relating to strangers from a position of humility and grace, the posture of some has been of privilege and entitlement. There are many examples of this in the history of the church. Tzvetan Todorov’s book *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (1999) discusses in detail the subjugation of the Indians in Guatemala as part of the Spanish *Requerimiento* (the Declaration of Sovereignty in 1513), in which the natives were required to convert to Christianity. In this case, the expansion of Christianity and Spanish cultural pretensions are enmeshed in such a way that violence, dehumanization, and subjugation were considered part of the conversion process. Not all Christians agreed with these methods. Bartolomé de las Casas, Bishop of Chiapas, disagreed with this abuse and spent his entire career fighting both the church and Spain over the treatment of indigenous peoples. As Todorov points out, “Las Casas loves the Indians. And is a Christian. For him, these two traits

are linked: he loves the Indians precisely *because* he is a Christian, and his love *illustrates* his faith” (168).

Despite his love for the natives, however, it is also clear that Las Casas’ understanding of the Indians was limited. He never objected to the project as a whole. The question was whether he was truly interested in embracing the Indians and their cultural identity. His interest seemed more utilitarian; it was necessary to convert the Indians. Todorov argues that this approach to receiving the truth is still a form of coercion and imposes a form of violence on the other with little concern for the cultural identity of a particular group of people. This criticism is not a reflection on the value of evangelism, but rather addresses the importance of “distanc[ing] ourselves from ourselves and our culture in order to create a space for the other” (Volf 30).

Creating a space for others has not always been easy, either, because of fear or presumption. There is considerable anxiety that strange ideas and novel views may destroy our hold on truth. However, even the message of the gospel often cuts across our preconceived ideas and pretensions about the immutability of our own beliefs. It is only when we view Scripture as an “outsider” or when we read “over-against” ourselves and our personal views of truth and reality that we gain a glimpse of the truth of God. As Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones indicate in their work *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life* (1991), “[...] Scripture is not simply us in disguise; it should not be a mirror we use to reflect our prejudices back to us in the word of God” (112). This is why it is important to listen to the voices of “outsiders” and we are often surprised by what we learn, even though it may create discomfort.

The claims of exclusiveness that Christians sometime advocate is driven by belief in the universality of the gospel, as it should be, but this does not mean that Christians automatically have a corner on all truth. At times the church’s insular perspective has led to the worst kind of brutality and dehumanization as with the Spanish *Requerimiento*. Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer argued, interestingly, that Christ’s claims are not just on the church, but the whole world. This means that Christ takes form in the world among us here and now. This often comes in peculiar form, particularly among those who are marginalized and broken. Fowl and Jones indicate that for Bonhoeffer, this-worldly concern is part of the *vita christiana* (“Christian life”): “In the midst of that profound this-worldliness, Bonhoeffer argued, we need to live ‘unreservedly in life’s duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities’” (qtd. in 154-55). This means that Christians should engage in thoughtful and discerning readings of both the Scripture and the world to discover the way Christ takes shape in our time. For Bonhoeffer, this did not mean giving up the unique identity of Christianity. Christians must continue to hold consistently to the “arcane discipline” and the mysteries of the faith, but they should do so “in the middle of the village,” not behind walls or on the boundaries; they are “to be a Church for others” (qtd. in 155). A concern for strangers is part and parcel of the way of the cross, which is always set against the backdrop of the fact that “we were once aliens and strangers and at enmity with God,” but in spite of that we have been forgiven and reconciled by and before God. Welcoming strangers is based firmly

on our own forgiveness, and the will to embrace others should be extended prior to any judgment about others regardless of race, ethnic group, or socioeconomic status.

### Diversity as the Unfolding of Christian Hospitality

At the heart of the Christian witness is the love for others that is articulated in the good news of Jesus Christ. This is a love that is inexplicable because its source is the mysterious grace of God that reaches out in hospitality towards those who are strangers and aliens to God. This form of hospitality, however, is complicated and fraught with many dangers. Human hospitality is often tainted with narcissistic needs, as has been so evident in the history of the United States. However, God's love crosses the boundaries of defensiveness and exploitation and reaches into the spaces between different peoples and cultures. It is a cruciform model of hospitality in the sense that it is self-giving and sacrificial. Only a self-sacrificial model can crack the defensive walls that have been erected because of the violence and hostility that seem to be the natural tendency of humans. As Hans Boersma so profoundly illustrates in his work *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross* (2004), "[I]t is at the foot of the cross that we learn from God how hospitality is to function" (25). Citing theologian Reinhard Hütter, Boersma argues for the divine origin of the inclusion of the other in the Christian witness: "At the very center of this hospitality stands both a death and a resurrection, the most fundamental enactment of truth God's side and precisely therefore also the threshold of God's abundant hospitality" (qtd. in 25). Although postmodern writers, such as Emmanuel Levinas, have argued for the unique importance of hospitality toward the other as a first philosophy, Boersma makes the case that sacrificial love for the other is not a natural virtue; considering the other as good or better than ourselves is a divine virtue and reflects what Simon Morrison Steer calls "the hospitable heart of Yahweh" (qtd. in 27).

Perhaps the reason some Christians struggle so much with the idea of diversity is that a self-preservation model of the atonement is so predominant in American evangelicalism. This is the perspective that the foremost and exclusive end of the theology of the cross is to redeem individual souls from damnation and that this is the primary mission and purpose of the Christian church. This is not to deny the significance and importance of individual salvation—it is certainly the beginning of the Christian faith. However, if this is all there is of Christian theology, it makes all discussions of the Christian life and the community of the church an empty husk. Many theologians, such as Gustav Wingren and N.T. Wright, adopt the teachings of the early church fathers to explain the fullness of Christ's death and the life-changing salvation that he accomplished. Ireneus's concept of "recapitulation," for example, offers a corrective for the narcissistic tendencies in popular versions of the gospel. Recapitulation means that Christ's work makes it possible for men and women to live transformed lives with new ways of relating and new ways of living. Salvation means being human in the way God created us to be. This does not occur naturally or through human effort,

but only through the grace of God freely given and accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ. It dramatically changes the way individuals view others through the lens of forgiveness and redemption. Obviously, this means relating to others differently from what is expected. It is not a naïve hyped-up portrayal of life with no conflict or complications, nor is it an imperialist attitude that assumes an omniscient understanding of the needs, suffering, and concerns of others. Rather, it recognizes the source of this new life and the sacrifice that was necessary for its attainment. There is a calling and remembrance in this new life that places forgiveness at its center and orients the self in a new and different way to the other. The humility that evolves from the place of forgiveness opens the way for a unique understanding of the space between myself and the other—the alien and stranger.

Borrowing from Martin Buber, James Olthuis talks about the “sphere of the between” (36). According to him,

Love as gift creates a space-which-is-meeting, inviting partnership and co-birthing, and fundamentally calling into question the deconstructive idea that structures are necessarily always violent. It suggests a new thematization of meaning and truth as good connections, in contrast to both modernity’s power, control, judgment and postmodernism’s disruption and dissemination of any claim of entitlement to meaning and truth. Narratives are possible, not as grand control devices, but as tales of (broken) love coauthored in community. There are countless narratives of endless suffering and horror, but there are also wonderful tales (small, subversive stories) of meeting, healing, and suffering love in the midst of and in spite of suffering. (37)

This space-between is the place where love and hospitality begin. When Christians engage the other in humility with an expectation for something unique to happen, it opens a place for an altered definition of self. It is an orientation that does not assume superior knowledge, but displays a willingness to be affected by the other. In the process, a space is opened up for God. When love is present in any meeting with the other, love makes a way for transformation. This kind of love that pauses to hear the voice of the other, however different in experience and thought, is the overflowing and abundance of God (Olthuis 33).

## Conclusion

As we consider the import of “welcoming strangers” as a paradigm of the Christian faith and Christian academy, many will continue to have more questions than answers. How does the academy provide a context for the discourse of the other while remaining true to its heritage? How does the academy offer a hearing for alien voices while providing a prophetic critique to a broken and fallen world? How can Christians demonstrate sacrificial love while at the same time not being

blind to the hostility and destructiveness of human society? There are no easy answers, but the questions should be part of both the orientation and capstone culmination of Christian education. As has been discussed throughout this essay, the conversation must begin with recognition of God's hospitality demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Christ. Such love for the other is beyond comprehension, but it gives hope that Christians will find ways to meet the other that demonstrate and embody the truth of the gospel.

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## Book Reviews

Lundin, Roger, ed. *Christ Across the Disciplines: Past, Present, Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. 242 pages, \$20.00

Reviewed by C. Clark Triplett

*Christ Across the Discipline*, edited by the distinguished Professor of Faith and Learning at Wheaton College, is a collection of essays by a diverse group of scholars who engage in serious analyses of the major cultural and academic issues that complicate the process of faith and learning. The book is an homage to Arthur F. Holmes, former Professor of Philosophy at Wheaton College, and his seminal work, *The Idea of a Christian College*. Holmes wrote this work “out of a frustration ‘at narrower views of education and Christian service’ he had encountered early in his teaching career” (1). What is most refreshing about this work is that many of the essays attempt to find a more intellectually nuanced and academically honest interaction between faith and critical thought as opposed to what is often presented in popular models of faith and learning. Following Arthur Holmes’ lead, they explore truth more critically and humbly rather than with simple “indoctrination” or “accommodation.”

Although all the presentations in this volume are worth reading carefully, this review will briefly examine two of the essays which seem to represent the underlying questions that most of the writers address. One is a historical account of the tensions between fundamentalist “passions” and the more creative intellectual openness of the new evangelicals. The other essay considers the external challenges of the enlightenment, which is often antithetical to Christianity, as well as the internal divisions within Christianity about how to respond to critical challenges. Both essays reflect on the importance of the careful balance between faith and critical inquiry.

“The Blessings of an Uneasy Conscience: Creative Tensions in Evangelical Intellectual Life” by John Schmalzbauer, Assistant Professor of Protestant Studies at Missouri State University, explores the tensions in orthodox American Christianity, particularly as the sons and daughters of fundamentalist stalwarts who graduated from Ivy League institutions and began to engage the intellectual issues of the day in a different way. A division emerged within the church and the academy. The reactions on both sides of the divide were, at times, quite intense culturally and intellectually. Schmalzbauer reminds the reader of complaints from some of the intellectuals, such as J. Gresham Machen, who critically commented on a church culture where there was “the blowing of

enormous horns and other weird instruments,” and Carl F.H. Henry’s criticism of the “tendency to replace great church music by a barn-dance variety of semi-religious choruses” (qtd. 47). The criticism from the fundamentalist side of the divide, however, was equally caustic. Many complained that evangelical intellectuals, such as George Marsden and Mark Noll were advocating revisionist views of history and moving away from America’s Judeo-Christian heritage (60).

The tensions within the evangelical community were not limited to internal conflict. Many of the new academics found that the struggle between faith and the academic life could be quite painful. A prime example, according to Schmalzbauer, was Edward John Carnell, who taught at Fuller Seminary at the same time as Carl Henry and found that he was often marginalized in both worlds. Attempts to develop an intellectually acceptable faith could be “psychologically taxing and professionally humiliating” (qtd. 42). Carnell found it difficult to find his place as a scholar who was too liberal for the fundamentalists and too conservative for the world outside of evangelicalism. As Schmalzbauer laments, “after a lifetime grappling with the contradictions in his background, he succumbed to an overdose of sleeping pills in 1967” (37).

The “uneasy conscience” that Carl Henry spoke of in his classic work has continued to plague evangelicals, even into the twenty-first century. Schmauzbuer identifies three sources of uneasiness that tend to be problematic in efforts to relate faith to the academic arena: the persistence of conspiratorial themes in evangelical discourse, the continuing appeal of bad history, and the way evangelicals have been depicted in the media. Schmauzbuer believes these issues are problematic because of larger cultural differences. Evangelicals are at the same time different and yet the same. An unwillingness to recognize views from the other side creates a tension that seems perpetual. This myopia is found both inside and outside of the camp. In an increasingly polarized war of cultures, it is absolutely imperative, particularly in the process of faith and learning, “to mediate between worlds” (71). The growing cultural diversity of evangelicals has helped in some ways to mitigate the “mythology of the American past” (70). Recognizing that Christians have a common spiritual source, it is important to seek common ground in spite of sometimes radical differences on politics, social morality, and economics.

Eleanore Stump, Robert J. Henle Professor of Philosophy at St. Louis University, also considers the challenges from inside and outside the faith with a focus on two intellectual movements that have significantly impacted not only culture as a whole but in particular the Christian academy. Modernism, since the time of the *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment), has been antagonistic to Christianity primarily because it poses the argument “that all reputable learning is a universal or generically human enterprise” (118). This means that scholarship is something that everyone can pursue regardless of his or her particular viewpoint. Modernists also believe that the pinnacle of academic learning is the scientific method and that any objective approach to knowledge should use this method. Christianity or theology does not use the scientific method and is particularistic in that it is not a perspective everyone holds or claims regardless of vantage point.

Postmodernism is a reaction to the universal assumptions of modernism. It is an approach to scholarship that recognizes that even science, with all of its accomplishments, is influenced by “human biases, self-interest, and politics” (119). According to postmodernists, it is impossible to escape the impact of cultural particularities and social contexts. The underlying bias of science and much of Western intellectual pursuits is the Western white male perspective, which privileges this one particularity over all others at the expense of other cultural perspectives that are not heard because of it.

It is not surprising that a number of Christians have adopted postmodernism due to hostility that is sometimes perceived coming from the scientific and academic community as a whole. Since postmodernism leans toward a perspectival view of knowledge and learning, “Christianity is as allowable as any other particularity and perspective” (120). Stump believes that such a view is problematic because there is no critical framework for correcting any position. Unless there are some means of stepping out of a particular frame of reference, attempts to justify truth are always self-reflexive. However, Stump argues that the great divines of Christianity, such as Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther, made much more robust and demanding claims than ones of postmodernism. Their claims were the claims of truth placed on everyone. The expectations of Christianity are universal rather than just a particular point of view.

Ultimately, Stump adopts a position similar to modernism, and she believes that this position is the most amenable to Christianity. At the same time, she recognizes that modernism has not lived up to its ideals, particularly in terms of the Eurocentric male interests that have often imposed themselves upon the academy. The best way to overcome this failure is “to follow the particularist path and let competing particularities in the academy argue it out” (127). This is necessary as the tendency towards self-deception and moral evil that blinds human beings to their own flaws. Diverse perspectives provide a safety net against self-deception. This argument provides for a universal hope for discovering universal truths, but also acknowledges the tendency toward human evil that demands a viewpoint that constantly challenges its own. With this in mind, Christian scholars may graciously accept that “[t]he external challenge to Christianity in the academy is consequently wrong and yet still a blessing” (128).

The internal challenge of divisions within the Christian faith is an equally pressing concern related to the process of faith and learning. According to Stump, one of the key sources of division is the struggle over orthodoxy and heresy. While this is an important issue, for evangelicals in particular, it has become a source of embarrassment and disdain for some because those outside the camp simply do not understand the significance of it. It is not always clear whether the conflict, which raises such a head of steam, is about core issues or issues that are really peripheral to the faith. The important question for Stump, however, is that assuming the clarity of the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy, what should be the proper attitude toward those who hold such beliefs: “[I]t is a great mistake to suppose that one can make a legitimate inference from the appropriateness of rejecting a belief to the appropriateness of rejecting the person who holds that

belief” (130). According to Stump, it is a “wretched mistake” to judge a person’s character even as a Christian because they have a set of beliefs that may vary from our own. There are certainly many examples of committed and dedicated individuals who have lived exemplary lives, though their doctrinal views may not be aligned with a particular group. Perhaps most egregious is when “coercion” is used to treat those who hold to beliefs that are rejected by the community of faith. If the tables were turned, which is quite possible in a secular society, Christians would certainly hope or even expect that their perspective would be respected, particularly if there was pressure to adhere to a position that is antithetical to their belief system. According to Stump, such pressure undercuts the love of truth, and any attempt at coercion “is bound to be a concern for any society, but it is disastrous for the Christian community” (132).

Both the external and internal challenges to faith and learning integration are bound together. Christians have always maintained at least an underlying belief that there is a universal truth for everyone to know about the source of all truth. This belief allows for the possibility of integration of all other areas of academic pursuit. At the same time, “this integration will work best in a pluralistic environment, in which both truth and orthodoxy are sought but adversaries and heretics are protected” (132).

These two contributions offer a representative sample of the “big picture” issues that are presented in this book. This is not a book about the details of faith and learning methodology, but a discussion of how the Christian community, both church and academy, interacts with the broader intellectual concerns. There is a sophisticated understanding of the complexity of this dialogue and the need for honesty and integrity in the exchange of ideas. There has been a tendency for discussions on faith learning to have an “echo chamber” effect rather than seriously engaging the difficult questions that non-Christian scholars pose. This occurs, perhaps, out of fear that the foundations of Christian faith will crumble if hard questions are addressed. If there is a genuine pursuit of truth, Christians must seriously engage in self-analysis and humble reflection, and whether or not the responses they sometimes glibly provide are a demonstration of the “love of truth.” Evangelicals, in particular, need to be acutely aware of where they are located in the current cultural context and how typical Christian discourse may be a reflection of cultural categories that may or may not be “purely” Christian. This work makes a serious effort to address the challenges of faith and learning, both externally and internally. The contributors seem to be committed to continuing a conversation, which will allow for a serious and respectful dialogue with those who may not always agree with their premises. It may be that the Christian faith will hold up under the most critical scrutiny from across the disciplines.

Brock, Brian, and John Swinton, eds. *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. 576 pages, \$45.00

Reviewed by Carol J. Austin

Historical treatment of people with disabilities, viewed through a secular viewpoint, is a growing contemporary theme. Brian Brock and John Swinton expand this discourse in their edited book, *Disability and the Christian Tradition*. This collection brings together fourteen experts in theology and disability studies, exploring the definition of humanity, impairment, and societal interaction with people who are different. The volume is arranged in chronological order by periods of history. The journey begins with the Church Fathers, moving through Medieval and Enlightenment ages, and continuing into the Reformation and Modern era. Each contributor points out themes and offers commentary based on theological writings. Excerpts from original writings are also included. It should be noted that this collection is intended for the serious scholar.

Acknowledging that “disability” is a modern term, the editors introduce the collection by exploring how disabilities—variations in human mental and physical capabilities—have been conceptualized throughout the centuries. A distinction is made between Postmodern and Christian thought. The former focuses on normalcy and deviance, centering on those considered to be marginalized or different and setting up “us” and the “other.” Instead of looking at people with disabilities as “special problem cases,” the Christian worldview focuses in a positive way on “what it means to be human.” Thus, rather than “disability in the Bible,” the essays center on Christian tradition, reflecting on people with what we now label a disability and on how they are perceived within the church body.

After developing a commonality of focus, the Church Fathers’ (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa) writings are presented, highlighting the great cultural shift brought about by Christian thought. In opposition to Greek and Roman belief, which held that those with disfiguring conditions should be purged for the benefit of all society, Christianity offers a pivotal turning point by holding that every human life has intrinsic value. Not only is every life considered valuable, believers are admonished to take action and care for those who are facing societal exclusion.

The influence of Christian thought continues with an analysis of Augustine, who shaped Western Christian thought for centuries to come. His writings suggest that focusing on deformities in others could be viewed as our lack of ability to see God working in each person to create a “beautiful whole.” Augustine admonishes us to ponder the examples of people who live “gracefully with infirmities,” examining their virtue of patience.

Building on Augustine’s themes, Aquinas addresses the theme of acceptance for all human life and the importance of all in the life of the church. Aquinas’ theological writings reflect that every human being is created with a

complete and whole soul, through which, we bear the image of God. While acknowledging that the operations of the soul may be “thwarted by the infirmities of the body or brain,” the capacity for a relationship with God is not diminished.

Prompting us to examine our perceptions of disability conditions, Julian of Norwich, through her own suffering, reflects on the suffering of Christ. In a time of male dominance, Julian admonishes believers to leave fear behind, and to become involved with the “messiness” of people’s lives. Closely following Julian, we come to Martin Luther, whose theme of grace extends to all people of all abilities. Realizing all are made equal in God’s judgment can then lead us to rethink the meaning of physical or mental disabilities.

We next meet John Calvin, who established institutions that cared for disabled people in Geneva and proclaimed, “God stands on the side of the outcast and the outsider.” Juxtaposed to his themes of inclusion is his belief in predestination: God has chosen a person’s path. This complication of Calvin’s work is fertile ground for future discussions.

The enlightenment period, next on the stage of history, is represented by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, and Willem van den Bergh. Hegel’s reasoning leads to considering people with mental disabilities, like all humans, engaged in the unending process of development. Kierkegaard’s discourses prompt us to consider how our attitudes and expectations can cause more suffering than the mental challenges or physical pain the disabled live with. Lastly, demonstrating practical concern, Van den Bergh of the Netherlands established the “Association for Christian Care of Insane People and Neuropaths” as he promoted a better world for those who could not defend themselves.

Leading us into the twentieth century, this volume explores the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth. Bonhoeffer’s personal suffering and experiences with disabled people are evident in his thoughts on what it means to be human, as he stresses the need to be respectful towards all human life. Barth continues this theme as he explores relationships between humans in the light of God’s love for all.

The final three chapters include contemporary theologians—Jana Bennett, Hans S. Reinders, and John Swinton—as they explore the struggle for justice in social and legal arenas. Bennett explores the role of women as it intersects with disability. Reinders shares insights gleaned through living with mentally disabled people. We can learn of our own weaknesses through learning about the weaknesses of others, thus stripping away illusions of ourselves. Swinton suggests that we look at the assumptions people make regarding people with profound intellectual disabilities. This searching can lead to a fuller understanding of what it means for all of us to be human, which in turn will lead to a more just society.

The commonality of “humans relating to each other through the example of Jesus Christ” brings these diverse theological writings together. Throughout all fourteen essays, we are admonished to embrace and connect with whom we today refer to as disabled. Including each theologian’s original, pertinent writings enables firsthand access to Christian thought through the ages, thus facilitating continuing dialogue that centers on the intersection of Christianity and disability.

*Disability in the Christian Tradition* is a deeply scholarly work that lays a historical, anthropological background for others to build on. It is a worthy contribution to the growing field of disabilities studies.

Koschorke, Klaus, Frieder Ludwig, and Mariano Delgado, eds. *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America: A Documentary Sourcebook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007. 426 pages, \$35.00

Reviewed by John J. Han

In recent years, the growth of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has captured much attention from academia. Scholarly publications such as David Chidester's *Christianity: A Global History* (2000), Philip Jenkins's *The Next Christendom* (2002; rev. 2007), Mary Farrell Bednarowski's *Twentieth-century Global Christianity* (2008), and Dana L. Robert's *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (2009) attest to the growth of Christianity in the non-Western world. Indeed, churches in these continents—sometimes incorrectly termed as the churches in the Global South (geographically, China belongs to the Global North)—have witnessed explosive growth, especially among evangelicals and Pentecostals.

*A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America* is a welcome addition to the growing body of resources on the development of global Christianity. Unlike other books mentioned above, this book is a collection of historical documents. Three scholars, one from the United States and two from Germany, collaborated on this volume. As the subtitle indicates, the book compiles numerous documents illustrating how Christianity was received, what kind of challenges it faced, and how much success it achieved outside the West. Because it is a collection of mostly brief documents, this book can be read in any order—by continent, by country, or by document.

Many documents display the interactions between Christians and non-Christians. In 1551, a debate took place between Jesuits and Zen Buddhists in Japan. They debated over issues such as sainthood, the origins of the universe, the position of people in the natural order, and good and evil. The two sides presented classic arguments for their respective faiths: the Christian idea of *principio* (principle) vs. the Buddhist idea of emptiness, the Christian idea of salvation vs. the Buddhist idea of enlightenment, and the Christian idea of creation through God's words vs. the Buddhist idea of four elements, among others. When the Jesuits commented that humans are superior to animals due to their ability to differentiate between good and evil, the Buddhists argued that animals and humans meet the same fate: death. In a sense, they continued, animals are higher than humans because the former "live their lives without worry, pangs of conscience or sadness" (23).

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), an Italian Jesuit priest, is another case in point. Once he arrived in China, he mastered ancient Confucian texts to understand the culture and mindset of the natives. Unlike the missionaries who demonized native cultures, he found an element of monotheism in Confucianism: Shangdi (上帝, "Celestial Emperor"). Ricci suggested the possibility of salvation of ancient Chinese based on their conscience: "They never accepted such improper

teachings about the King of Heaven and his servants, the other spirits, as our Romans, the Greeks, the Egyptians and other foreign peoples did. We may hope that many of their ancestors were saved through the natural law...” (35). Li Zhi, the Chinese philosopher who met Ricci a few times, tremendously respected him for his intellectual capacity and good manners, although he wondered why Ricci was staying in China. Li also believed that “it would be much too stupid for him to want to substitute his own teaching for that of the Duke of Zhou [Confucius’ hero] and Confucius” (36).

Although some encounters between missionaries and natives were amicable, many others were accompanied by violence. A fifteenth-century document reports on the Portuguese enslavement of a young African man in the name of the Gospel: “They found a hut, in which they captured a young man who was wholly naked, and who carried a short lance. [...] This young negro was afterwards educated according to the order of the Infante, and he was taught all such things as a Christian should...” (145). In the early sixteenth century, Portuguese Catholics invaded city states in East Africa, killing the natives who resisted, plundering the towns, and then burning them (146-47). Both the papal bull of concession *Inter Caetera* of Alexander VI (1493) and the *Requerimiento* (1513) termed Catholic crusaders in Latin America as conquerors of “the barbarous nations” that needed to be overthrown (284, 288).

Readers will find why some people groups welcomed the Gospel and why others did not. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Koreans embraced Protestant Christianity as a religion of hope that can advance the country not only in spiritual matters but also in education, in healthcare, in social reform, and in its struggle against the Japanese occupation. Conversely, India’s Gandhi explains why he did not become a Christian. Although he was tremendously attracted to Christianity, and especially to the figure of Christ, he thought Hinduism met his spiritual needs as much as Christianity could (109). Meanwhile, Kim Il Sung, the founder of North Korea, comments on the Sermon on the Mount from a postcolonial perspective. According to Kim, Christianity was America’s imperial tool to subjugate Koreans, and the Sermon on the Mount should be reinterpreted. Instead of turning the other cheek to the enemy, one should revenge twofold: “If you slap us once, we will return two slaps” (122).

*A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America* is a fascinating read and can serve as an excellent supplement to traditional textbooks on the history of Christianity. In this book, readers will not read what scholars say *about* historical events; rather, they will encounter hundreds of documents that speak for themselves. The volume will reveal the successes and failures of foreign missions, the challenges faced by missionaries, and the ways in which Christian faith underwent cultural adaptation for survival on foreign soil. Not only historians but also those in the fields of theology, missiology, and cross-cultural studies will benefit from reading this indispensable resource.

**Endō, Shūsaku.** *Kiku's Prayer: A Novel.* Translated by Van C. Gessel. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. 328 pages, \$29.50

Reviewed by John J. Han

Shūsaku Endō (1923-96), perhaps the best-known Catholic novelist from Japan, already enjoys wide readership in the West for *Silence* (沈黙 *Chinmoku*, 1966), a historical novel that deals with the Tokugawa shogunate's persecutions of Catholic converts in the early seventeenth century. *Kiku's Prayer* (1982) chronicles Catholic persecutions in Japan as well, but it is set in the 1860s, when political power shifted from the shogunate to the emperor.

From the 1540s, when Francis Xavier and the Jesuits arrived in Japan, until the early years of the Meiji period (1868-1912), numerous Japanese Christians, as well as some foreign missionaries, were subject to religious oppression. Following the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-38), for instance, 37,000 Christian men, women, and children died at the hands of government troops (Spickard and Cragg, *A Global History of Christianity*, 212). As the emperor began to consolidate his power in the late nineteenth century, he strove to build a nation based on the principles of Shinto, the native religion of Japan. Christianity was considered a heretical religion that undermined the traditional values of harmony, loyalty, filial piety, and religious eclecticism. Severe persecutions of Kirishitans (Christians) ensued. *Kiku's Prayer* portrays the sufferings of Catholic Christian Japanese who chose death over apostasy. The novel also deals with the self-sacrificial love of a non-Christian woman—the title character—for a dedicated Christian man, Seikichi.

The original title of the novel is 女の一生: キクの場合 (“A Woman's Life: The Case of Kiku”). As the novel opens, we encounter the title character, a tomboy in Urakami Village that borders Nagasaki. Kiku is different from other girls—she is independent-minded, strong-willed, and adventurous. Defying social norms, she falls in love with a young man who is a fervent Catholic and thus is on the government's blacklist. The attraction occurs not because she shares his faith. Rather, it is because of his kind heart and his intense dedication to a religious cause, which mystifies her.

Following the fall of the shogunate, hundreds of Kakure Kirishitans (“hidden Christians”) from Urakami display their faith in public. Their religious freedom is short-lived, however. The imperial government arrests them and banishes them to prisons in several remote locations. Along with more than 150 fellow peasants, Seikichi is exiled to Tsuwano, a small hilly town in Kanoashi District, Shimane Prefecture. The prisoners suffer torture, bitter cold, starvation, and despair. Under psychological and physical torture, some commit apostasy, but many others happily die for Christian faith. (Tsuwano Catholic Church [津和野天主教會] commemorates 36 Japanese Christians who died as martyrs in

1868.) Still others, including Seikichi, endure persecutions until the government officially lifts the ban on Christianity in 1873.

An important theme of this novel is martyrdom. The severity of religious persecution is vividly portrayed when Father Furet explains to Bernard, a fellow Catholic missionary in Japan, the ways in which Japanese converts were tortured in the hot spring two centuries earlier:

“I suspect the fires of Gehenna mentioned in the Bible were like this,” Father Furet muttered as he covered his mouth with a handkerchief. “Watch your step. If you fall in, that water, which must be several hundred degrees hot, will melt your leg off. And—” He paused for just a moment and then in one breath said, “The Japanese Kirishitans who would not abandon their faith...were thrown into this boiling water. The flesh on their legs melted off in an instant, and when they were pulled out again, nothing but their bones remained. Do you understand, Bernard? Nothing was left of their legs but white bones....” (71)

The sufferings of Seikichi and his fellow believers are also painful. The security officers whip the prisoners, strip them naked and tie them to a pillar in piercing cold winter, and taunt them to pray to the Blessed Mother so that she can rescue them out of misery.

The novel raises the question of what made Japanese Christians so bold in the face of dreadful persecutions. What made them turn their backs on their ancestors’ religions and philosophies, such as Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism? Although sociological explanations are possible, the novel clearly shows the power of the Gospel which, in the early church, turned the cowardly Simon Peter into a dedicated follower of Christ.

Another theme of *Kiku’s Prayer* is the tragic, pain-filled love of a woman—a common theme in traditional Japanese literature. Poems by Ono no Komachi (c. 825-c. 900) and other female waka poets typify the sad emotions of a distressed lover. Kiku’s love for Seikichi, however, transcends romantic feelings; she loves him with her whole being. She even grudgingly sleeps with Itō, a wicked man, who extorts money from her promising that he would make Seikichi’s life in prison easier. Instead of bribing prison officials with Kiku’s hard-earned money, he squanders it in a bar. Under pressure for more money, Kiku becomes a prostitute.

Although a depraved, heartless man, Itō is touched by Kiku’s enduring love for Seikichi. Raping her does not fill his spiritual void, either; he knows that her heart belongs to Seikichi, a virgin man. In one of his rendezvous with Kiku, who mechanically responds to his fleshly desires, he feels utterly despondent:

It was twilight, and it looked as though a gentle rain was falling outside. Itō rolled on top of Kiku, and as he watched her gape like a stone statue at the ceiling, waiting motionlessly for a man’s lust to dissipate, he felt an ineffable futility. Guilt, bitterness, and

loneliness—the emotions swelled one after another through his breast. (273)

At the end of the novel, Itō develops respect for Christians and marvels at their persistent faith. One day, after torturing prisoners, he drinks with two of his colleagues, one of whom calls them “idiots.” Itō disagrees:

“Idiots...? How could idiots put up with all the horrible tortures we’re inflicting on them and still cling to their beliefs? They’re no idiots. They’re a strong bunch...strong...! If I were forced into their position, I could never be as strong as they are.” Then, in a solemn voice he muttered, “Do you think there’s any chance...any chance that this God they believe is real?” (268)

Itō’s questioning may indicate that his spiritual journey has begun.

*Kiku’s Prayer* serves as a wonderful window to the nineteenth-century history of Christianity in East Asia. Times have changed, and religious freedom is fully guaranteed in Japan. Although the current Christian population is less than 1% in Japan, the legacy of Christian faith is evident. Prestigious private universities, such as Doshisha University (founded 1875) and Sophia University (founded 1913), were established by Christian educators. Prominent Japanese Christians also include several prime ministers, such as Masayoshi Ōhira (1978-1980; Anglican), Tarō Asō (2008-09; Roman Catholic), and Yukio Hatoyama (2009-10; Baptist). *Kiku’s Prayer* is a gripping text set in an era when Japan was transitioning to modernity under imperial rule. Christian readers will not be disappointed with this excellent work, which will reveal the meaning of its title at the end.

Chambers, Andy. *Exemplary Life: A Theology of Church Life in Acts*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2012. 240 pages, \$29.99

Reviewed by Carol J. Austin

Today, many church bodies are striving to be relevant in the current culture while staying true to Biblical principles. In this vein, a desire exists within the Christian community to emulate the early church. In his book *Exemplary Life*, Andy Chambers contributes to this discussion by examining in depth the early church as portrayed by St. Luke in the book of Acts.

Luke, who is considered the church's first historian, planted churches and shared his convictions about what life in the church should look like. His beliefs are found in three Biblical passages, traditionally known as the "summary narratives" (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; and 5:12-16). From these passages, Chambers distills twenty characteristics illustrating exemplary church life in the first century. Looking back to the early church for guidance, the author applies these concepts to today's culture, espousing his desire to strengthen the contemporary church. Thus, as R. Albert Mohler, Jr., points out, Luke's narratives become "deeply relevant...to Christian life in our contemporary age" (back cover).

Preceding the exploration of Luke's summary narratives, the first two chapters of the book lay the groundwork for the case Chambers is making. Chapter one summarizes modern critical approaches to the book of Acts. These studies have underemphasized Luke's theology of church life, in favor of the historical-critical method, which separates theological and literary context. Chapter two then makes the case for and explores the narrative technique used by Luke to describe life in the Jerusalem church. This technique is a method that goes beyond the "scenic or episodic narration into summary mode" (5).

Chapters three through five each detail church life vignettes, describing the life of believers as they gathered in the first local churches. The first narrative directly follows Pentecost. At this time, believers made multiple commitments to the leaders and each other. Followers recognized and committed themselves to the apostles' authority as Jesus' spokespeople. Fellowship with other believers became a foundation of believers gathering together, sharing meals, remembering the death of Christ through Lord's Supper, and meeting regularly to pray. This hospitality, together with being one in Christ, helped overcome divisions in the body of believers. Love for each other spilled over to the city, and more people were added to the body of believers.

The second narrative repeats the theme of generosity and introduces the topic of unity. Oneness in soul and mind, a gift from God by the Holy Spirit, united the early church across social and economic lines. This led to a "profound reorientation toward worldly possessions" (99) as believers shared their belongings with others in need. Combining resources led to great transformation, such as helping the poor among them.

The third narrative is sobering as it relates the story of the judgment against Ananias and Sapphira's deceitfulness in their contributions to the church.

God's chastisement of this couple brought great fear when the early church experienced God's seriousness firsthand, denouncing deception and stressing the importance of integrity. In addition, the apostles' leadership was strengthened, and they performed many signs and wonders. Regular meetings continued, and the numbers grew. The believers were praised and respected "for the way they lived and loved each other" (114).

In the remaining three chapters, Chambers extrapolates the precepts delineated above. The author first points out how Luke urged the Gentile worshipers to honor their Jewish roots. As these new believers formed bodies of worship, they were admonished to follow the same patterns as their Jewish brethren. Thus, the Gentile church echoed their fellow Jewish believers in their beliefs and actions. These guidelines or themes are listed in the form of twenty characteristics—characteristics which provide the basis for a Lukean theology of church life. The theology ranges from repentance and Scriptural authority to praying together and earning the respect of neighbors.

After thoroughly analyzing the writings of St. Luke and the church, Chambers applies these ideals to relevancy in today's world, providing practical applications for church practice. He suggests that one begin by reading the book of Acts publically, as was done when it was first written. Next, believers are admonished to notice the examples of the early Jerusalem church, highlighting good qualities while not ignoring problems. Every church should be on God's mission, taking the gospel to its local city and beyond, extending hospitality, and emulating the example of our Savior, who genuinely enjoyed the friendship of people. As believers gather together, share the Lord's Supper, and truly love one another, views toward worldly possessions radically change. This shift leads to true compassion and sharing with those in need so that there will be no poor among us.

Chambers's great passion for the church shines throughout his writing as he urges today's church to be relevant in current culture by examining the early church in its culture. The author's comprehensive analysis of Luke's early church narratives is presented in an organized, analytical manner, with extensive documentation. By suggesting specific attitudes to cultivate and concrete actions to take, the book speaks to both Biblical scholars and lay people who desire to make an impact in today's world.

In reading this book, one is stuck anew with the overwhelming importance of the local church. In the words of the author, *Exemplary Life* will "[provide] believers in Jesus with a rich theological resource for faithful formation of churches in any generation and cultural context" (60). Further, the reader is left aching to be part of a body of believers who model these precepts in their church body, maintaining the integrity of the early believers, and building what George H. Guthrie terms "the modern church on an ancient and rock-solid foundation" (back cover).

## Poems

### “Because” and Tanka

John Samuel Tieman

#### Because

I discipline a student  
I take her outside

I instruct her in the years it takes  
to understand the cicada’s call

to understand the cicada’s longing  
I say discipline requires

a desk in the darkness  
a notepad of glass

because discipline is what you know  
but barely notice

#### Tanka

in my classroom  
hidden among the stark halls  
one bare window  
I’m suddenly invaded  
wind coming down the street

\*

I am issued  
93 books and 9 months  
to teach all there is  
of Ahab and his great whale  
and all the seas that haunt me

\*

a suburban church  
I pray a Basho poem

I pray for nothing  
God rewards me with nothing  
but spring leaves and blinding sun

## Three Poems in Praise of the Triune God

Jonathan Blackmon

### Our Father in Heaven

We worship You, our Sovereign King  
Before Your throne of grace;  
Your hallowed Name we love to sing  
And see Your smiling face.  
In wisdom all Your works are done,  
Creator, we adore;  
Your kingdom come through Christ the Son,  
From age to age endure.

We worship You, Almighty God  
In whom we move and live;  
You know our needs before we ask  
And from Your fullness give.  
So give today our daily fare  
Through Christ the living bread;  
Forgive our debts and bless with peace  
The people You have fed.

We worship You, our Gracious Lord;  
With providential hand,  
Deliver us from evil ways  
To live Your righteous plan.  
Teach us to love as You have loved—  
A Father's grace bestow,  
That as Your will is done above,  
So also here below.

### We Praise Your Name, Redeeming Christ

We praise your Name, redeeming Christ,  
Abram's seed and David's Son;  
O promised offspring long foretold,  
We thank you for salvation won!

We bless your Name, O Son of Man,  
Lord of all who rules by right;  
O suffering servant, sow your Word,  
Sustain us with the bread of life!

We glorify your Name, O Christ,  
Savior of our fallen race;  
O Son of God now raised in pow'r,  
We live to praise your glorious grace!

### A Prayer to God the Holy Spirit

Creating Holy Spirit  
Who broods upon the deep,  
We praise you with the life-breath  
That woke us from death's sleep.  
You form each living creature,  
Renewing sky and sod,  
And build Your global temple  
With all those born of God.

Convicting Holy Spirit,  
Our righteousness increase;  
We tend to sin against You  
While forfeiting Your peace.  
We often grieve and quench You—  
Forgive our rebel ways;  
Do not forsake or leave us,  
Renew our hearts for praise.

Advising Holy Spirit,  
Attorney for our Lord,  
You counsel us in wisdom,  
By teaching us His Word.  
Encourager and Helper,  
The peace of Christ impart—  
Declare the truth of Jesus  
And write it on our hearts.

Revealing Holy Spirit,  
You search the Father's mind  
And pray in wordless groanings  
The words we could not find.  
Prepare us to inherit  
The blessing of the meek:  
Empower us to witness  
And loose our tongues to speak.

## “Caught” and Other Poems

Linda Tappmeyer

### Caught

The bright red figure,  
caught by tree fingers  
clutching their silken  
treasure to heart,  
took me by surprise.

Red kite straining  
against willowy grasp  
before gently resting  
crossbow frame on  
solid branching arms.

Beneath—a disappointed owner  
watches sadly, jerks violently,  
relinquishes slowly.

I watch, knowing I, too,  
am subdued by a sturdy tree,  
pierced red,  
covered in silken blood,  
caught.

I struggle briefly,  
gasping at the firm hold,  
yet suddenly fly free again,  
unfettered,  
new master pulling the string at will.

### Artists' Renderings

On the European floor of the gallery,  
renditions of the Christ child reign,  
announcing medieval popularity of the King.

But for my taste  
He seems disproportionately small in this one,  
too large in that one, too chubby in another,  
too anemic in the one by the door,  
evil looking in the fresco by the window.

The artists, like me,  
create deity in their own images—  
incomplete perception.

### Disobedience

Eve offered her young husband  
a taste of fleshy apple.  
No big deal, you say, but  
her creator told her not  
to introduce  
his innocent child  
to knowledge and to sin.

My granny allowed my young self  
a taste of scary movies.  
No big deal, you say, but  
my mother told her not  
to introduce  
her innocent child  
to vampires and to bats.

I gave my two-year-old granddaughter  
a taste of Diet Coke.  
No big deal, you say, but  
her mother told me not  
to introduce  
her innocent child  
to chemicals and to fizz.

## **“The Second Dawn” and Other Poems**

Louis Fischer

### The Second Dawn

A light began to glow in Bethlehem,  
Illuminations borne beyond the age  
Of oldest sages sent to speak of him,  
Whose finger formed the form that would be his  
And theirs his image-bearing parentage.

Unmindful of the sacred shores bejeweled  
with crowns, the swells of praise, cascading echoes  
from the well of life, thrown back from angels'  
affirmations of the everlasting story,  
the Creator pierced creation long prepared.

A Word established world received the Word  
And in a cradle kept, infinity  
Untied and time unraveled as a chord  
Within his eyes whose body, more than body,  
The genesis unfurled: an age was born.

### Of One Being

First rays of a Galilean sun tripped  
across the lake and splashed on rocky  
faces, dusky at the hour he came, still  
standing by the shore he formed a lone  
figure on that morn, praying in the day.  
With life the flesh enveloped light received  
the darting beams that winked between the cloud  
concealing heaven, blinking back the urge  
to burst those self-assigned restrictions, shaped  
by high demands. And yet the sun gave light  
because its sparkle danced its way below,  
but only glowed so bright to show its source.

## The Broken Script

A scribe in Sumer pressed the dark impressions  
on a tablet, clay, the ill-conceiving  
wedged remarks describing what his gods might be,  
whose raging competitions tore the land,  
and men: caught twixt angry earth and stormy sea.

Wedge and stylus, to stone or papyrus,  
in scribal hands of Old Babylon, Egypt,  
Greece, and Italy, became the weapons  
of the wise, taming in description fearful  
gods, while writing man in majesty.

In scriptoria from Inverness to Rome,  
monastic craftsmen re-imagined saints,  
drawn bold with high expression, their holiness  
evoking empathies with ancient gods,  
domesticated: brought home from wild unknown.

Bringing him their own traditions carved in stone,  
the Pharisees brought challenge to describe  
the God who was and will be King, but Jesus  
grasped their words between almighty hands, and  
smashed them with his own, and broke the scripts  
of history—His name, who is—*"I AM."*

## Notes on Contributors

Carol J. Austin <austincj@mobap.edu> is Professor of Counseling and Human Services at Missouri Baptist University. Teaching, research, publishing, and presentation interests include special education, family therapy, and online learning. In addition to presenting at many international conferences, she has published articles in *Kansas English* and *American Counseling Association Vistas*. Currently she is co-editing (with John J. Han) a book on disability in literature. She earned a B.S. from Eastern Michigan University, a M.A. from Michigan State University, and a Ph.D. from Saint Louis University.

Jonathan Blackmon <BLACKMONJ@mobap.edu> serves as Associate Professor of Music and Director of Worship Arts at Missouri Baptist University. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Dr. Blackmon directs three ministry group ensembles and oversees the Worship Arts Program. He earned his Ph.D. in Church Music and Worship from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, a Master of Music degree also from Southwestern Seminary, and a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Howard Payne University.

Dr. Blackmon has served various churches in music and worship ministry for more than 20 years. He holds memberships in the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), Society for the Arts in Religious and Theological Studies (SARTS), American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), and the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE).

Louis Fischer <bfischer@nnu.edu> is Assistant Professor of Language, Literature, and Culture at Northwest Nazarene University, as well as a missionary pastor in the Anglican Church of Rwanda. He primarily teaches literature from Old English to the Renaissance, and his scholarly research explores the role of imaginative literature produced as a result of the Church's spread into cultures unfamiliar with Christianity. He edits a journal of the arts produced through his local church, and he is committed to encouraging local churches in their engagement with the arts, both as a means of worship and of pointing others to the glory and grandeur of God.

John J. Han <hanjn@mobap.edu> is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Missouri Baptist University, where he also chairs the Humanities Division. He is editor of *Wise Blood: A Re-Consideration* (2011) and has published articles in *Journal of Bunka Gakuen University*, *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, *Kansas English*, *Literature and Belief*, *The Moral Philosophy of John Steinbeck*, *Steinbeck Studies*, *The Steinbeck Review*, and other journals and essay collections. His poems have also appeared in periodicals and anthologies worldwide, including *Asahi*, *Cave Region Review*, *Elder Mountain*, *Four and Twenty*, *Frogpond*, *A Hundred Gourds*, *The Laurel Review*, *Mainichi*, *Nepali Art and Literature*, *Prune Juice*, *Simply Haiku*, *South by Southeast*, *Taj Mahal Review*, and *World Haiku Review*. A native of South Korea, he earned his M.A. and his

Ph.D. from Kansas State University and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, respectively.

Eleanor Hersey Nickel <eleanor.nickel@fresno.edu> is an Associate Professor of English and chair of the English Department and Humanities Division at Fresno Pacific University. She received her B.A. in English from Gordon College, her M.A. in English from West Virginia University, and her Ph.D. in English from the University of Iowa. Her main research area is contemporary American popular culture and she has published articles on *The X-Files*, *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, Hollywood romantic comedies, and Jan Karon's Mitford series. Her current research focuses on popular television shows, films, and novels that include Christian characters and that have wide Christian audiences.

David Puller <david.w.puller@lonestar.edu> lives in Houston, Texas, with his wife and two daughters. He is a reference and instruction librarian at Lone Star College-North Harris. Puller teaches information literacy and his college's first year experience course. He earned a B.A. in History from Ohio Wesleyan University, a Master of Library and Information Science degree from Kent State University, and an M.A. in Theological Studies from Asbury Theological Seminary. He regularly publishes and makes presentations at professional conferences on library technology.

Cordell P. Schulten <schulten@gmail.com> is an associate professor of American and International Law at Handong Global University in Pohang, Korea. He has also taught at Fontbonne University and Missouri Baptist University. Before teaching, he practiced law for ten years, specializing in commercial litigation and death penalty cases. Schulten earned his M.A. in Theological Studies from Covenant Theological Seminary in 2004 and his J.D. from Saint Louis University School of Law in 1986. He has also done graduate studies in Theology and Culture at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

John Samuel Tieman's <jstieman@aol.com> award-winning chapbook, *A Concise Biography of Original Sin*, is published by BkMk Press of the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Another collection, *Morning Prayers*, is published by "The Pittsburgh Quarterly Online." His poetry has appeared in *The Americas Review*, *The Caribbean Quarterly*, *The Chariton Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *River Styx*, and many other venues, and has been translated into French, Japanese, Arabic, Serbo-Croatian, and Spanish. A teacher in the St. Louis Public Schools, Dr. Tieman is also a widely published essayist. He earned a bachelor's degree and his M.A. from Southern Methodist University, and his Ph.D. from St. Louis University.

C. Clark Triplett <triplett@mobap.edu> is Vice President for Graduate Studies and Academic Program Review and Professor of Psychology/Sociology at Missouri Baptist University. He earned an A.A. from Hannibal-LaGrange College, a B.A. from Southwest Baptist University, an M.Div. from Covenant

Theological Seminary, an M.S.Ed. from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, and a Ph.D. from Saint Louis University. He also studied at Concordia Theological Seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary, the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland, and the Harvard Institutes. He is co-editing (with John J. Han) a collection of essays on death and dying in literature.

# *Intégrité: A Faith and Learning Journal*

## Submission Guidelines

Interested Christian scholars are encouraged to submit academic articles (15-25 pages), short essays (6-10 pages), review articles (10-12 pages), book reviews (4-8 pages), and 3-5 poems (40 or fewer lines each) for consideration. Send manuscripts as e-mail attachments (Microsoft Word format) to the editor, John J. Han, at [hanjn@mobap.edu](mailto:hanjn@mobap.edu). Due dates are March 1 for inclusion in the spring issue and September 1 for the fall issue. We accept submissions all year round.

All prose submissions must be typewritten double-spaced. For citation style, refer to the current edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Articles and short essays should include in-text citations in parentheses, a list of endnotes (if applicable), and an alphabetical listing of works cited at the end of the article. Book reviews need only page numbers in parentheses after direct quotations.

### Articles

Articles should examine historical, theological, philosophical, cultural, and/or pedagogical issues related to faith-learning integration. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- the current state and/or future of the church-related college
- history of Christian liberal arts education
- Christianity and contemporary culture
- a Christian perspective on multiculturalism and diversity
- service learning
- academic freedom in a Christian context
- implementation of Christian truths in academic disciplines
- Christian education in the non-Western world
- global Christianity.

Articles must engage in faith-learning issues or controversies in a scholarly, critical manner. We generally do not consider manuscripts that are merely factual, devotional, or sermonic. We typically do not consider articles that use more than twenty-five secondary sources; merely present other scholars' opinions without developing extended, thoughtful analysis; and/or use excessive endnotes. Direct quotations, especially lengthy ones, should be used sparingly.

### Short Essays

We welcome short essays on issues related to Christian higher education, such as pedagogy, culture, diversity, and globalization.

### Review Articles

We consider review articles—extended and in-depth reviews of recently published books. In addition to a summary and critique of the book(s), the article should elucidate the key issues related to the topic.

### Book Reviews

Each issue of *Intégrité* includes several book reviews. Scholars are welcome to submit reviews of books published during the past few years.

### Poems

We welcome submissions of poems that pay attention to both form and content.

### On writing style

Considering that most *Intégrité* readers are Christian scholars and educators who may not have expertise on multiple disciplines, we recommend concise, precise, and easy-to-understand writing style. Writers should follow what William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White suggest in *The Elements of Style*: use definite, specific, concrete language; omit needless words; avoid a succession of loose sentences; write in a way that comes naturally; and avoid fancy words.