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Holy Friars in Lucifer’s Pocket: Examining Chaucer’s Reflections on the Corruption in the Church

Jessica Wohlschlaeger

“‘Deedly synne,’ as seith Seint Augustyn, ‘is whan a man turneth his herte fro God, which that is verray sovereign bountee, that may nat chaunge, and yeveth his herte to thyng that chaunge and flitte’” (Chaucer 298ll.368). These lines from the parson’s sermon in Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales reflect the corruption that occurred within the church during the Middle Ages as the clergymen had turned their hearts away from serving God in order to pursue earthly treasures. Because of this departure, friars became corrupt, cheating people out of their money and their livelihood in exchange for false blessings and promised prayers, which were never spoken. This corruption reflected the state of the official church, which exemplified chaos within its clergymen and in their interactions with the world (Maxfield 71). In response to this widespread corruption, anti-fraternal texts began circulating throughout England, which complained about the friars’ corrupt actions. This anti-fraternal attack upon the church and its clergymen began thirty years after the beginning of two prominent orders, Franciscan and Dominican (Williams 500).

Richard FitzRalph, one of the most fervent critics of these fraudulent fraternal orders, continually advocated for action against dishonest friars at the Papal Court at Avignon until his death (Miller 255). In his sermon “The Defense of the Curates” FitzRalph speaks about the corruption in these supposed Godly men, saying, “It is a strange way of life for those who say that they profess the Gospel, and yet act contrary to the very words of Christ…” (qtd. in Miller 256). FitzRalph was not the only person who condemned the friars’ behaviors as John Gower, medieval poet and contemporary of Chaucer, openly criticized the friars’ actions in the “Vox clamantis.” He writes, “They hide their shameful deeds under sanctimonious words. Poor without poverty and holy without Christ, thus does a man who is lacking goodness stand out as eminently good” (qtd. in Miller 267).

When Chaucer joined this anti-fraternal assault, it had been occurring for about a century and a half, which meant that the arguments and complaints evolved into more “complex and varied forms” (Williams 500). To address these varying issues, Chaucer created a unique friar character within The Canterbury Tales, who fit within both FitzRalph and Gower’s depictions of corrupt clergymen. Chaucer’s presentation of the friar is a “detailed but satirically traditional picture of him” begging people to give material wealth based upon the need for forgiveness and the promise of prayers (Finlayson 459). FitzRalph, Gower, and Chaucer were most concerned about these types of friars because of their ability to hide their evil natures through a shroud of artificial holiness. This
intentional deceit concerned Chaucer the most because these men easily swindled the innocent into believing that they were absolved of their sins through acts that could potentially condemn their souls to hell.

Within “The Parson’s Tale,” Chaucer’s parson specifically warns against the treachery of such pseudo friars saying, “And thise ordred folk been specially titled / to God, and of the special meignee of God, / for which, whan they doon deedly synne, they / been the special traytours of God and of his / peple; for they lyven of the peple, to preye for / the peple, and while they ben such traitours, / here preyer avayleth nat to the peple” (319ll.893). According to Chaucer’s Parson, these friars are despicable to God as they masquerade around as holy men whose only desire appears to serve God and help people. However, because their hearts and flesh commit the deadly sins, without remorse, they continually lead people away from the truth, which is why they are considered special traitors. These men’s insincere prayers go unanswered as God will not support such evil, and this title of special traitor guarantees the friar’s hellish end. However, because the friars appear holy, they also have the potential to steal innocent souls to accompany them, which is why Chaucer emphasized this concern within The Canterbury Tales.

To demonstrate his disquiet, Chaucer created a friar who commits at least three of the seven deadly sins to show that “[…] Seint Paul seith that Sathanas transformeth hym[sel]f in an aungel of light. / Soothly, the preest that haunteth deedly synne, he may be likned to the aungel of derknesse transformed in the aungel of light. He semeth aungel of light, but for sothe he is aungel of derknesse” (Chaucer 319ll.894-95). By creating an authentic angel of darkness who had committed three deadly sins out of the seven between “The General Prologue,” “The Friar’s Tale,” and “The Summoner’s Tale,” Chaucer purposely creates a friar, who at first glance may seem pious and righteous like an angel of light but whose true nature as an angel of darkness is hidden. This character’s intentional deception demonstrates how blatant the moral corruption within the church had become.

In The Canterbury Tales Chaucer specifically creates a friar who represents the angel of darkness pretending to walk in the light. When this servant of Christ is first introduced within “The General Prologue,” Chaucer’s narrator immediately reveals the friar’s first deadly sin, lechery, which not only affects his eternity but the eternity of others. The narrator carefully chooses the words that first introduce the friar’s personality:

A Frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,  
A lymtour, a ful solempine man.  
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan  
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.  
He hadde maad ful many a mariage  
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost. (26ll.208-13)

According to this passage, the friar is a man who is known to seek and delight in pleasures, which his speech and silver tongue help him attain as his mastery of
language cannot be rivaled by anyone within the other four fraternal orders. Within “The Summoner’s Tale,” the friar’s words are likened to the sweet chirpings of a sparrow (130ll.1804), which supports the narrator’s claim that the friar is a crafty wordsmith. In fact, these statements revealing his gift with words are placed before the acknowledgement that this particular friar paid for many young women’s marriages, which implies that the first statement causes the second. As a result, the summoner insinuates that the friar paid for the weddings because his flirtatious tongue led him to the deadly sin of lechery. The implication in these few lines is that the friar impregnated these young women, but to hide his deadly sin of lechery, he marries these women to other men using his own money, which sped up the marriage process. By the time the young women would start to show, they would already have been married to their new husbands, so that the world would never suspect the real father was the friar. Not only do the friar’s actions guarantee the friar will burn in hell, but also his actions condemn these young women to a fiery end as well.

According to “The Parson’s Tale,” “Certes, this is the fouleste thefte that may be, when a womman stethle hir body from hir housbonde and yeveth it to hire holour to defoulen hire, and stethle hir soule fro Crist and yeveth it to the deevil” (319ll.877). This trusted friar engages others in the same deadly sin that he participates in, which draws more people away from God; in fact, the parson compares the action of premarital fornication to giving the devil their souls. Because the friar is practiced in the art of deception, he easily hides his deadly sin from the other people and continues to fictitiously forgive their sins, which was one of Chaucer’s main concerns about the friars.

Within “The Summoner’s Tale,” Chaucer’s summoner creates the friar character, who is a reflection of the friar on the pilgrimage, to be just as blatant in his lust for women. While the friar does not have physical intercourse with Thomas’ wife, he obviously yearns for her in his heart, which according to the Bible is the same as committing the physical sin; in the New Testament, Jesus says, “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5.28). Chaucer’s summoner describes the friar’s lust-filled actions upon seeing Thomas’ wife:

The frère ariseth up ful curteisly,
And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kiste hire sweete, and chirketh as a sparwe
With his lyppes: “Dame,” quod he, “right weel,
As he that is youre servant every deel,
Thanked be God, that yow yaf soule and lyf!
Yet saugh I nat this day so fair a wyf
In al the chirche, God so save me!” (130ll.1802-09)

Upon greeting the wife of the house, the friar rises and first embraces her tightly before kissing her sweetly on the lips. Both of these actions are inappropriate conduct for a friar as a tight hug allows him to feel the woman’s breasts pressed up against his body, and the sweet taste of a woman’s lips is not how the
summoner should describe a congenial greeting between a clergyman and a married woman. In the Middle English Dictionary, the adverb sweetly when speaking of people means “lovingly, affectionately” or “attractively, beautifully” (“swēt”). After wrapping his arms around her and kissing her in this manner, the friar welcomes her with a much deeper passion than that required of a kind welcome. Additionally, the word sweetly can also mean “fresh-tasting” (“swēt”). In this case, her kiss is like water for the friar. He needs her kiss to survive and to feel renewed. However, this refreshment should not come from the embrace and kiss of a married woman. According to John Finlayson, author of “Chaucer’s Summoner’s Tale: Flatulence, Blasphemy, and the Emperor’s Clothes,” “The difference between the friar’s socially ‘courteous’ speech and the sexual resonances of a ‘courteous/courtly’ embrace are pointed to by reference to the sparrow, a common image of indiscriminate sexual union even today, and become blatant in his assertion that he never saw anyone as beautiful in church that day” (459). These underlying sexual tones and images as well as outright flattery imply that the friar’s kiss is filled with sexual desire and that he thoroughly enjoys the touch of her body through a hug.

The summoner chooses to describe the friar in a manner similar to William of Saint-Amour’s treatise, “The Perils of the Last Times,” which warns against the behaviors of pseudo apostles as “[t]rue apostles do not creep into houses, nor lead captive silly women laden with sins” (qtd. in Miller 246). While the friar has not defiled Thomas’ wife, he already commits the sin of lechery in his heart, and he subtly tries to seduce the wife with flattery as he says that she is the most beautiful woman he has seen in all of the churches that he has visited. In response to his flattery, she reveals her own sexual frustrations with her husband, who is ill at heart and angry (Finlayson 459). These intimate revelations make her prey to the friar as she admits her blooming loneliness. While the wife may still have a pure body, it is questionable if she still has a pure heart and mind where the friar is concerned as she does not reprimand him for such intimate treatment.

Within this particular tale, the friar is not the only one who is affected by his hidden deadly sins, which supports Chaucer’s concerns about the dangers of corrupt clergymen roaming the villages throughout all of England. Thomas’ child and Thomas, himself, have also suffered the fate of a pseudo friar who gives false blessings over the years to people who become unsuspecting victims. When speaking to Thomas, the friar ardently explains, “’In our chapitre praye we day and nyght / To Crist, that he thee sende heele and myght / Thy body for to weelden hasitly’” (132ll.1945-47). To this Thomas replies,

> “God woot,” quod he, “no thyng therof feele I!  
> As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeres,  
> Have spent upon diverse manere freres  
> Ful many a pound; yet fare I never the bet.  
> Certyn, my good have I almoost biset.  
> Farwel, my gold, for it is al ago!” (132ll.1948-53)
Thomas has spent his entire fortune on paying these friars, and their orders, to give his family blessings and to pray for the health and overall well-being of his family. The friar even tells Thomas that his orders’ prayers are more sacred to God as they are poor in spirit, which allows them to clearly hear and follow the will of God, and that God blesses their ministry and whomever they interact with, wherever they go (131ll.1921-23). However, within his lifetime, Thomas never feels or sees the results of these prayers despite his faithfulness in supporting the various friars who would pass through town. In fact, it is just the opposite as his child died two weeks after the main friar came to visit and “forgave” the family of their sins and promised to continue to pray for them as well as for the recovery of their child (131ll.1852-53). While many reasons might exist that their prayers went unanswered, Chaucer, through the summoner, seems to imply that the child’s death resulted from the friar’s deceitfulness and his failure to pray for their ill son.

The second deadly sin that Chaucer, the narrator, announces within “The General Prologue” is the friar’s arrogance and overwhelming pride in his station, his abilities, and his power over the populace.

Ful wel beloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat…
In love-dayes ther koude he muchel help,
For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,
But he was lyke a maister or a pope. (27ll.215-20; 258-61; emphasis mine)

While the friar may be well known and quite familiar with the townspeople, this man boasts that he has a stronger and more powerful confession than the local parson because he has a papal license, which allows him, in his mind, a higher and more reverent status within God’s kingdom. While pride is not always negative, the summoner creates a friar who misplaces his pride upon his license and the status he receives in the community as man of God; the friar chooses to boast of his earthly successes, not of the works that glorify God and not in the work that God is doing, which is another sign of William of Saint Amour’s false apostles (qtd. in Miller 249). This license, which he is not afraid to flaunt, allows the friar to justify his arrogant attitude as he believes that his religious education and endorsement give him a higher standing within society and, more importantly, within the eyes of God. This attitude of superiority transfers itself to other clergymen as well, whom the friar views as inferior because they devote their lives to intense studies of the Bible and other religious texts. The friar condemns the monks, whom he considers hermits, because they remain cloistered from the outside world. The friar believes himself to be superior because he
imagines that he works hard to aid the people, but the irony here is that he is not serving the people as a friar is called to do, which makes him a hypocrite.

The rule of St. Francis specifically discusses the friars’ manners of working and commands that the brothers who are able to do manual labor should “do so faithfully and devotedly, so that idleness, the enemy of the soul, is excluded…” (St. Francis 567). While the friar is not physically inactive as he diligently begs from house to house, he is idle in his spiritual duties to himself and others because he has committed another mortal sin, pride; his conscience has not pricked his soul, which means that his connection to God is weak. Additionally, within “The General Prologue,” the narrator describes the friar’s neck as “whit was as the flour-de-lys” (27ll.238), indicating that his skin was soft from the lack of physical labor in the sun, which occurs when serving the community (Cooper 41). However, Chaucer’s narrator uses the friar’s soft neck to reveal the friar’s pride in his ability to escape such menial labor, which would benefit the people, as other scholars and clergymen adamantly attributed their white necks to their cloistered habits (Horton 33). The friar does not trouble himself with a disguise to hide the whiteness of his neck, which indicates his pride in his talents to deceive the people as he continually implores the people for food and shelter without returning the favor.

Within “The Parson’s Tale,” Chaucer’s parson qualifies these types of actions as arrogance and insolence—a result from pride—by saying,

> Arrogant is he that thynketh that he hath thilke bountees in hym that that he hath noght, or weneth that he sholde have hem by his deserties, or elles he demeth that he be that he nys nat. Inpudent is he that for his pride hath no shame of his synnes. […] Insolent is he that despiseth in his juggement alle othere folk, as to regard of his value, and of his konnyng, and of his spekyng, and of his beryng. (299-300ll.395-98)

The friar tries to impose a hierarchy of righteousness onto the people because his pride leads him to believe that he deserves the highest status within the community as he likens himself to a cardinal, and perhaps even the pope. The parson’s sermon reiterates the fact that all men are equal in the eyes of God because everyone sins and is unable to reach heaven without the forgiveness of Christ. Anyone who believes himself to be superior to his brother has fallen prey to the deadly sin of pride. Chaucer uses this blatant sin within the friar to demonstrate how one man can corrupt entire communities into believing that some people are superior to others, which enables the continuing cycle of the deadly sin of pride.

When the friar tells his tale to the group on the pilgrimage, Chaucer chooses to have the friar demonstrate this sense of superiority by telling a scathing tale about another clergyman, the summoner. Instead of preaching a sermon about salvation or edifying the group, Chaucer has the friar tell the tale of the summoner, which is an affront to all summoners and their positions, to
demonstrate how the friar’s sin affects other people. After scowling at the summoner, the friar introduces the subject of his tale:

Pardee, ye may wel knowe by the name
That of a somonour may no good be sayd;
I praye that noon of you be yvele apayd.
A somonour is a rennere up and doun
With mandementz for fornicacioun,
And is ybet at every townes ende. (122ll.1280-85)

A man of God should not judge others so harshly, yet the friar does not hesitate to do so by comparing the station of summoner to that of an errand boy whose messages are contaminated with the sin of fornication. Chaucer through the narrator of the pilgrimage recognizes the condemning tone of the friar and lightly rebukes him by saying, “‘A, sire, ye sholde be / hende / And curteys, as a man of youre estaat; / In compaignye we wol have no debaat’” (122ll.1286-88). The narrator gently reminds the friar that such words of hatred are not proper to a man in his position as a devoted follower of Christ. The Franciscan Friars strictly demand that “…when [friars] travel about the world, they should not be quarrelsome, dispute with words, or criticize others, but rather should be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to all as is fitting” (St. Francis 567). This friar fails to fulfill this standard as he quarrels, baits, and criticizes the summoner in this passage alone, and in “The General Prologue,” he criticizes anyone whom he deems inferior to his educational standing. Chaucer creates a friar who is a direct contradiction with the Franciscan teachings to demonstrate the serious nature of clergy corruption which occurred in the church as well as to expose their negative influence upon the people. In this case, Chaucer does not directly reveal the negative influence that this sinful man has on the other pilgrims; however, because they are subject to his arguments and misplaced pride, they are still exposed to the man’s deadly sin.

With the summoner’s permission, the friar continues his unflattering and scathing tale, despite the fact that his story will lead to a quarrel with the summoner. Chaucer uses the retaliation of the summoner’s tale to reveal the friar’s sense of entitlement, which is linked to the deadly sin of pride. The friar character who appears in “The Summoner’s Tale” allows Thomas, the ill master of the house, as well as his wife, to call him “maister” (130ll.1781, 1800). The friar on the pilgrimage also allows the host to call him master without correction at least twice (122-3ll.1300, 1337). In his text the Romance of the Rose, Jean de Meun, a critic of the church, argues that calling a friar “master” is morally wrong and attributes to the sin of pride as “[…] [friars] want to be called ‘master,’ which they shouldn’t be called, for the gospel goes against this practice and shows its unlawfulness” (qtd. in Miller 253). Chaucer’s friar intentionally allows the people to address him as master to reverse the roles of servitude because the term master implies owner, authority, and superiority. When the people address the friar as master, they, unintentionally, elevate the friar’s station—and ego—and place themselves in the position of a servant, or someone who is below the
master. For example, when the wife asks the friar, “‘Now, maister, […] ere that I go, / What wol ye dyne? I wol go theraboute’” (130ll.1836-37), she places herself in the role as servant because she questions the friar, who assumes the master role, about his dining preferences. While the fact remains that she is the wife of the house and her role is to offer the friar sustenance, she places the ultimate decision of what is being offered in his hands, which means he holds the power to decide what he will be offered to eat.

Within “The Summoner’s Tale,” the friar demonstrates that he understands and wrongfully encourages this hierarchy of righteousness because he allows the people of the village, like Thomas and his wife, to call him master despite the fact that it is against the rules of his order; however, he cannot allow the lord of the village to call him by that name without consequence as the lord’s standing within the community is higher than his own. When the lord encourages the friar to tell of his troubles by saying, “‘Now, maister,’ quod this lord, ‘I yow biseke —’” (135ll.1284), the friar immediately interrupts and corrects the misuse of the term “master” by saying,

“No maister, sire,” quod he, “but servitour, 
Thogh I have had in scole that honour. 
God liketh nat that ‘Raby’ men us calle, 
Neither in market ne in youre large halle.” (135ll.2185-88)

Within this passage, Chaucer’s summoner reveals that the friar comprehends his previous actions as inappropriate because he corrects the lord’s same misuse of the term master where he allowed the continual abuse of the term when speaking to Thomas and his wife. The friar further admits through his study of the Bible that God desires for the friars to be known as servants; however, he has had the honor of being called a master by those he taught in the universities and schools. Chaucer’s summoner treats this casual admittance as “another instance of fraternal usurpation of roles such as those of hearing confession and soliciting funds within parishes that already had pastors whose authority descended directly from the apostles” (Hodges 323). By his language in an earlier scene, the friar disregards God’s desired role for the friar by allowing Thomas and his wife to repeatedly call him master, which not only causes the friar to sin but also Thomas and his wife.

While the deadly sin of pride does not include Thomas and his wife, they have, however, fallen into the sin of idolatry as the term master derives its meaning as a “leader,” “applied to God, Christ,” “the most important member of a group,” and “one who has control over somebody or something; one in control; a superior in a hierarchy” (“maister”) while the term rabbi means “‘my master,’ from rabh ‘master, great one’” (Harper) (emphasis mine). By allowing the family to use the term master, Chaucer uses the friar and his language to demonstrate Thomas’ family fell prey to the friar’s sin by treating him like a god and considering him their master; whenever he would come to town, they gave him money, a place to stay, lavish foods, and anything else that the friar requested to receive his blessing. While Thomas, his wife, and child were not worshiping the
friar, in many ways, their treatment of him could be considered worship to curry his favor for blessings, and in the end, the child loses his life because of the sin, which the friar laid at their door.

The last grievous sin, which Chaucer plagues upon the friar’s heart, is the mortal sin of greed as he wrongfully “think[s] that godliness is a means to financial gain” (1 Tim. 6.5). Chaucer creates a friar who clearly understands these spiritual dangers as over twenty lines within “The General Prologue” are devoted to his skill of extracting money (Cooper 41), and Chaucer uses the friar as a manipulator of the people and of scripture to demonstrate the dangers of glossing and how it negatively affects other people’s eternity. Thus, Chaucer clearly introduces the problems with spiritual glossing as well as its practices because they involved an intentional manipulation of biblical scriptures (Hayes 1). In “The General Prologue,” the narrator reveals the friar’s ability to easily forgive others’ sins when they pay for their absolution in silver coins:

For unto a povre ordre for to yive / Is signe that a man is wel yshryve; / For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt, / He wiste that a man was repentaunt; / For many a man so hard is of his herte, / He may nat wepe, although hym soore smerte. / Thefore, in stede of wepyng and preyeres / Men moo yeve silver to the povre freres… (27ll.225-32)

According to the friar, any person can fake tears or pretend to feel sorrow for his/her sins, which would not lead to absolution; however, others are incapable of expressing their heartfelt sorrow for their sins, which is why he creates an alternative method to achieve forgiveness, based upon the opposite of biblical principles. The friar sets his own personal desire for money above God (Cooper 41). He is more concerned about obtaining money from poor people than he is about their souls as his “new” method of forgiveness allows people to believe that they can achieve heaven of their own accord by giving money, which they have earned, to the church. His heart has lost the focus of Godly love, and he is focused on gaining and maintaining his own personal wealth. As a result, his greed continues to grow while his conscience continues to shrink.

The friar specifically preys on people’s insecurities, as the path to heaven often seems uncertain, and questions abound about how people could know, without a doubt, that their souls were saved from the fiery pits of hell. He maintains that when a person freely gives a gift, specifically money, to the friars, that gift serves as an authentic sign that he/she has confessed; because of his/her willingness to part with such material wealth, that attitude is a concrete sign which reflects true forgiveness. While this belief may sound legitimate, within the Franciscan order, St. Francis forbids the acceptance of money by friars either directly or indirectly, and if such a need would arise, regardless, the friars should not be handling money (St. Francis 567). The friar disregards this rule when he collects the people’s money in exchange for blessings and forgiveness. The only way to “[come] to the Father,” or receive true forgiveness for a person’s sins, is through Jesus Christ, not wealth, works, or any other means (John 14:6). The
Friar glosses these scriptures to support his greedy nature while damning innocent people to hell as they continue to lead their lives, not knowing of the friar’s false methods. In essence, these people unwittingly continue to support the friar’s counterfeit ministry through their donations, which makes them indirect accomplices to the friar because their money allows him to continue his ministry of deceit. Chaucer creates the friar on this pilgrimage, who blatantly disregards and glosses these scriptures, which demonstrates that his greed for an abundance of money and material wealth not only ignores God’s regulations and the rules of his own order, but also potentially binds someone’s soul to hell.

One concern for Chaucer concerning these friars was their ability to deceive the people by hiding their deadly sins in seemingly angelic deeds, which is why Chaucer uses the narrator to display the friar’s perverseness. In “The General Prologue,” he continues his introduction of the greedy friar by saying,

He knew the tavernes wel in every toun
And everich hosteler and tappesere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere,
For unto swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with sike lazars aqveyntaunce.
It is nat honest; it may nat avaunce,
For to deelen with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.
And over al, ther as profit sholde arise,
Curteis he was and lowely of servyse;
Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste beggere in his hous. (27ll.240-52)

Though the friars claim to be servants of Christ, they shun the very people that Christ ministered to and welcomed into His presence (Mark 2:17). This friar avoids, and even loathes, the beggars, the sick, and the poor because no profit can be attained from people who have nothing to give. Additionally, the friar deems them, “by his facultee,” (27ll.244) as unworthy beings to receive his potential time, attention, and blessings because he views them as inferior in his religious hierarchy of people. Instead, he ministers to people who he knows will reward him with some sort of materialistic return, which is why he focuses his ministry on people who have wealth. For example, he frequently ministers to the town taverns to obtain free drinks and food, the inn-keeper to acquire a place to sleep, and the rich to receive money or other luxurious items to further his greed for wealth. His familiarity with the bar maid implies that he frequently indulges in her services, which include alcohol and, perhaps, intercourse, depending upon how the reader interprets the term “knew” (27ll.240). The friar shuns the lepers and the beggars, but in the next moment, he ingratiates himself to people with material wealth. Indeed, this friar knows his sins and continues to take advantage of the people he should be serving.
In fact, Chaucer creates the friar’s greed to be so insatiable in his search for more wealth that he freely and without conscious cons poor widows, who “hadde noght a sho” (27ll.253), to give him something to demonstrate how the friars mastered the language of deceitful flattery (Cooper 41). When he has plenty to eat, the friar continues collecting food, money, cloth, and whatever else he can swindle from the people for a profit. In “The Summoner’s Tale,” the character friar resembles the friar on the pilgrimage in every manner:

When folk in churche had yeve him what hem leste,  
He wente his wey; no lenger wolde he reste.  
With scrippe and tipped staf, ytukked hye,  
In every hous he gan to poure and prye,  
And beggeth mele and chese, or elles corn.  
His felawe hadde a staf tipped with horn,  
A peyre of tables al of yvory,  
And a poyntel polysshed fetisly,  
And wroot the names alwey, as he stood,  
Of all folk that yaf hym any good,  
Ascaunces that he wolde for hem preye.  
Yif us a busshel whete, malt, or reye,  
A Goddes kechyl, or a trype of chese,  
Or elles what yow lyst, we may nat cheese;  
A Goddes halfpenny, or a masse peny,  
Or yif us of youre brawn, if ye have eny;  
A dagon of youre blanket, leeve dame,  
Oure suster deere—lo! Heere I write youre name—”  
(129ll.1735-52).

After the friar receives as much as he can from the church, he begins to peep and pry from house to house to “supplement” what the church could not provide. While begging at a house would not seem inappropriate or greedy, especially as that was how he made a living, it becomes problematic when he continues to visit each house in town especially after receiving numerous gifts from the local church and previously visited houses. While seemingly gracious in his request, the friar bears no shame in asking for a specific variety of goods including cheese, beef, bacon, pig, money, blankets, and clothes—some of which would have been considered extravagant for a person to offer. In fact, this type of description finds its basis upon one of FitzRalph’s—the main advocate against the treachery of clergyman—complaints pressed against the friars, which appears in his “Defense of the Curates”:

[T]hey beg not as poor men should at the gate or door, meekily [sic] asking alms as Saint Francis taught and requires in his Testament, but unasked they come right into houses and courts, where they are sheltered and given food and drink. And even though they bring with them grain, meal, bread, meat or cheese,
they will take something more away with them even if there are but two in the house. (qtd. in Miller 256)

Additionally, the large number of homes that the friar visits to beg for alms displays his greedy desire for more than adequate sustenance as he seeks more and more goods to contribute to his overall wealth. When depicting the friar’s begging methods, Chaucer’s summoner specifically chooses the terms “to poure and prye” (129ll.1738), which have negative connotations, to demonstrate the friar’s greediness as these words imply that the friar is like a thief who creeps into the house, peers into the family’s financial and material wealth, and takes a good portion of their livelihood for his own personal gain, which directly correlates with Gower’s—a contemporary of Chaucer who wrote the “Vox Clamantis”—complaint that, “They are now acting like people who have no property, yet under a pauper’s guise they grab everything” because of their insatiable greediness for more (qtd. in Miller 265).

Again, Chaucer illustrates how these deceitful men hide their darkness by pretending to be messengers of the light. In exchange for various goods, the friar promises to pray for the families as he writes their names upon a tablet, but the summoner’s use of the phrase “Ascaunces that he wolde for hem preye” (129ll.1745) implies that the friar has no intention of offering a blessing for the family because he views these exchanges as business arrangements. In essence, the friar gives a “service” for which he is richly rewarded. However, according to the Middle English Dictionary, the word assurance means “as if to say or indicate” or “with affectation factitiously, insincerely; deceptively” or “to deceive” (“ascaunce”). In a business transaction, a man’s word is only as good as his character; in this case, the friar’s word is virtually as unreliable as his character. In the friar’s skewed perspective, writing people’s names on a tablet is not a signed contract, but more of a way to monitor which families donated the quantity and quality of items, so that the friars can return to the households which have the best material wealth. When the friar visits that same town several months later, he has a record of which houses he can be “[r]efresshed moore than in an hundred placis” (129ll.1767). The friar chooses to stop at these types of houses repeatedly because he knows he can delight in the life of luxury to satisfy his greedy nature.

While the Franciscan order blesses the act of begging, St. Francis also charges clergymen to “give [the abundance of clothing or food] for pity to the brethren that want it, or to the poor in like manner” (St. Francis 560). The key word in this description is want; however, this term did not have the same connotation that twentieth century audiences are familiar with, which is a “desire” or to “wish for,” definitions which appeared in the early 1700s (Harper). In its original context, the medieval audience would have recognized the word want to mean “a shortage or lack of something” (“want”). In essence, when the friar found himself with an abundance of material wealth, he needed to give those items away to other needy clergymen or to the poor. However, Chaucer’s friar demonstrates such greed that he ignores his own order’s rules about the treatment of the poor, so that he can avoid the life of a pauper.
Chaucer creates a friar whose ideals and mannerisms exemplify Jean de Meun’s false apostles’ claim within the *Romance of the Rose*: “I would never try to stop confessing emperors, kings, dukes, barons, or counts. But with poor men it is shameful; I don’t like such confession. If not for some other purpose, I have no interest in poor people; their estate is neither fair nor noble” (qtd. in Miller 252). While the friar’s deadly sin of greed may not appear to directly affect anyone, the friar’s treatment and continual disregard of the poor create a standard for how the community should interact with these people. When others witness the friar’s casual indifference and loathing for the poor’s physical and spiritual well-being, they become infected with the same ideals because they trust the actions of a man of God to be in accordance with God.

Chaucer’s parson stringently warns against the psychological dangers associated with the mortal sin of greed: “For it bireveth hym the love that men to hym owen, and turneth it bakward agayns alle resoun, / and maketh that the avaricious man hath moore hope in his catel than in Jhesu Crist, and dooth moore observance in kepynge of his tresor than he dooth to the service of Jhesu Crist” (313ll.745-46). This type of thinking turns men’s logic inside out and creates in these men a hope found in material wealth rather than in Christ; this backwards thought process damns a person’s soul to hell. Because of the friar’s negative influence, people are misled into believing that the poor are unworthy of such services, which guarantees their souls a spot in hell, too.

Within *The Canterbury Tales*, specifically “The Friar’s Tale” and “The Summoner’s Tale,” Chaucer illustrates that when the friars’ hearts are tainted by any of the deadly sins, they walk in a shroud of darkness, hidden by false light. This deception harms not only their souls, but also every soul they encounter as the parson preaches:

And, as seith Seint Augustyn, “They been the develes wolves that stranglen the sheep of Jhesu Crist,” and doon worse than wolves. For smoothly, whan the wolf hath ful his wombe, he stynteth to strangle sheep. But smoothly, the pilours and destroyours of the godes of hooly chirche ne do nat so, for they ne stynte nevere to pile (314ll.767-68).

According to Chaucer’s parson who quotes St. Augustine, men like these friars are worse than the wolves devouring sheep because, at least, when wolves eat their fill, they stop attacking the flock. However, these friars continually assault Christ’s followers and devour their souls by pretending to be the whitest and most pure of all sheep, which deceives the people into falling into a false sense of security about their eternal resting place. The friars’ treachery has allowed the devil to steal many souls from Christ. The parson says,

[I]t is the gretteste synne that may be, after the synne of Lucifer and Antecrist.
For by this synne God forleseth the chirche and the soule that he boghte with his precious blood, by hem that yeven chirches to hem that been nat digne.

For they putten in theves that stelen the soules of Jhesu Crist and destroyen his patrimoyne. By swiche undigne preestes and curates han lewed men the lasse reverence of the sacramentz of hooly chirche, and swiche yeveres of chirches putten out the children of Crist and putten into the chirche the develes owene sone. They sellen the soules that lambs sholde kepen to the wolf that strangleteth hem. And therefore shul they nevere han part of the pasture of lambes, that is the blisse of hevene. (315ll.787-91)

Chaucer uses the parson to demonstrate the consequences of stealing souls from Christ as he compares that sin to be slightly less than that of Lucifer, who rebelled against God, and the Antichrist, who will return, deceive many people, and in the process steal many people away from Christ. Chaucer’s friars within The Canterbury Tales are so disconcerting because they reflect a similar level of evil. Besides stealing earthly money and material wealth, the friars also rob the people’s souls of a peaceful afterlife, and because these clergymen “do evil and have evil, and [they] may hope only That after [their] death-day the devil shall take [them]” (Langland.7.95.218-20). Chaucer demonstrates that the friar’s damnation not only occurs because he commits at least three of the seven deadly sins, which can automatically send a person’s soul to hell, but also, and more importantly, because he sent so many innocent souls to hell as well, which guarantees him a special place in hell. While Chaucer wrote in the Middle Ages, his warning about corruption in the church is still relevant, even more so today. With the rise of technology-based communications, the ability to disseminate information and opinions quickly has increased exponentially. As Christians, we must be vigilant to identify modern day pseudo-friars to protect us, our local flock, and the global Christian community.

Works Cited


“The Truth of the Other”: Using Literature and Role-Play to Facilitate Cultural Competence at a Christian University

Kelly Leavitt

Cultural competence—or its synonyms “global competence” and “intercultural competence”—are ubiquitous terms in higher education today. Universities worldwide are seeking curricular and co-curricular ways to prepare students for an increasingly interconnected, intercultural world. Darla Deardorff, executive director of the Association of International Education Administrators at Duke University and a leading scholar of cultural competence, was the first to develop a research-based model describing the process of intercultural competence. She defines intercultural competence as “a lifelong process whereby an individual gains certain attitudes and knowledge that facilitate an internal shift which leads to an external outcome: effectively and appropriately communicating with someone of another culture” (“Theory Reflections”).

Christian colleges have been particularly invested in developing cultural competency on their campuses because of their distinctive institutional missions. As we are each made in God’s image, we are called to approach others with dignity and respect and to extend love to all, but particularly outsiders, as Christ has done for us (Gen 1:27; John 15:12; Col 4:5-6; Gal 3:28; Luke 14:13; Rom 5:8). Calvin College, for instance, incorporates its faith-based mission into its Diversity and Inclusion Commitment: “Scripture calls us to love others as we love ourselves, to exhibit and extend hospitality and to pursue reconciliation (“Our Commitment”). Baylor has made a similar commitment through initiatives such as cross-cultural dinners, inter-faith dialogues, and conversations with the community to address important global and local issues” (“Cultural Competency Initiatives”). These are just a few examples of Christian colleges’ efforts to create safe, inclusive campuses.

While both Christian and secular universities are investing in cultural competence efforts, another conversation is happening in higher education—the “shrinking” of humanities departments (Jaschik). In 2016, Inside Higher Ed reported that undergraduate humanities majors decreased by 8.7% from 2012-2014 (Jaschik). Additionally, a report from The Academy of Arts and Sciences from May 2017 found, “After 10 consecutive years of declines, the humanities’ share of all new bachelor’s degrees fell below 12% in 2015 for the first time since a complete accounting of humanities degree completions became possible in 1987” (“Bachelor’s Degrees in the Humanities”). However, Michael Bérubé, professor of literature at Pennsylvania State University, argued that news outlets have it wrong: “There is indeed a crisis in the humanities. I have said as much in this very space: It is a crisis in graduate education, in prestige, in funds, and most
broadly, in legitimation. But it is not a crisis of undergraduate enrollment.” Despite disagreement over enrollment of humanities majors, it is undeniable that the humanities in higher education are on shaky ground.

It is ironic that universities are devaluing the very academic fields that can develop what they seek—cultural competence, or respect for diversity and intercultural understanding. Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics in the Philosophy Department, Law School, and Divinity School at the University of Chicago, Martha Nussbaum, illuminates this irony and argues for a revitalization of humanities education in her book, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. She mentions pedagogical strategies that have been helpful in developing qualities of global citizenship, role-playing being one of them. However, her argument does not address how college humanities instructors can implement constructive role-play in today’s classrooms. Building upon Nussbaum’s argument, this essay uses Darla Deardorff’s cultural competence model to illustrate how role-play pedagogy in a general education world literature course can develop cultural competence. Having taught this course at a Christian liberal arts university, I also theoretically analyze Deardorff’s model and discuss the implications for faith-based universities.

“Does Global Citizenship Really Require the Humanities?”

In her book, Nussbaum legitimates the “silent crisis” of humanities education worldwide, urging readers to recognize the serious threat it is to a healthy democracy: “The humanities and the arts are being cut away, in both primary/secondary and college/university education, in virtually every nation of the world,” she writes (2). Nussbaum continues, “Seen by policy-makers as useless frills, at a time when nations must cut away all useless things in order to stay competitive in the global market, they are rapidly losing their place in curriculum, and also in the minds and hearts of parents and children” (2). It is humanities—art, music, and literature—where, she contends, we develop the ability to think critically and cultivate empathy and respect for diversity, all qualities essential to democratic societies. Moreover, Nussbaum illuminates the disparity behind higher education’s preoccupation with cultural competence, yet simultaneous neglect of the humanities:

Does global citizenship really require the humanities? It requires a lot of factual knowledge, and students might get this without a humanistic education—for example, from absorbing the facts in standardized textbooks […] and by learning the basic techniques of economics. Responsible citizenship requires, however, a lot more: the ability to assess historical evidence, to use and think critically about economic principles, to assess accounts of social justice, to speak a foreign language, to appreciate the complexities of the major world religions. (93; ellipsis in original)
It is the humanities that train students to think deeply and critically about the knowledge acquired in other disciplines. Without a thoughtful examination of issues and ideas within all disciplines, Nussbaum would argue, we are blind citizens, not fully exercising our human liberty and not becoming global citizens.

She also argues that humanistic education has the potential to develop sympathy and empathy, which are crucial to successful intercultural exchange. The humanities “activate and refine the capacity to see the world through another person’s eyes,” she writes (96). When discussing pedagogical strategies that help develop sympathy and empathy, she highlights role-playing. Elsewhere in her book, she discusses the importance of Socratic dialogue, but also highlights its holes, namely in developing empathy and sympathy. Thus, she turns to Nobel Prize winning Indian author, educator and humanitarian Rabindranath Tagore to support her point. Tagore says the “education of sympathy is not systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed” (Nussbaum 95). Tagore experimented with pedagogy and found that role-playing is a way of “cultivating sympathy” among its players (109). Nussbaum adds, “When people take up the play attitude toward others, they are less likely — at least for the time being — to see them as looming threats to their safety whom they must keep in line” (109). While scholars easily glorify Socratic questioning (and with good reason), they too often shun the idea of “playful” pedagogy in college classrooms.

Developing Cultural Competence with Role-Play in World Literary Types

Based upon Nussbaum’s argument, I began to consider implementing role-playing into one of my courses at Missouri Baptist University to develop cultural competence. Each semester, I teach a general education World Literary Types course, a survey of world masterpieces from antiquity to the present. Fifty percent of the readings are Western texts (North America and Europe) and 50% are non-Western texts (Asia, Africa, and South America), and each instructor uniquely chooses the texts from an anthology. The objectives of the course include students’ gaining knowledge of global authors and texts and demonstrating cross-cultural understanding. While teaching the course, I was inadvertently encouraging students’ cross-cultural understanding, instead of intentionally designing theory-based curriculum to ensure cultural competence development. Applying Deardorff’s cultural competence model to the course, therefore, is a more thoughtful approach to accomplishing the objectives.

Deardorff’s model has four components: (1) attitudes; (2) knowledge, comprehension, & skills; (3) internal outcomes; and (4) external outcomes. Part one, attitudes, focuses on developing “respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery” (Berardo and Deardorff 45). The second part, knowledge, enables students to become aware of their own cultural identity as well as gain knowledge of other cultures and worldviews. This part includes skills such as “observation, listening, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating” (Berardo and Deardorff 46). Students engage in the third part when they experience an internal “frame of reference shift,” when they become more flexible and empathetic towards others.
Lastly, students demonstrate external outcomes and are able to engage in “effective and appropriate communication and behavior in intercultural situations” (Berardo and Deardorff 46).

To create attitudes of “respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery” in the class, I begin the semester by developing rapport and establishing a class agreement. Since the students role-play throughout the semester, it is important they feel comfortable with one another in class. To develop this rapport, at the beginning of the semester, I spend time during the first week incorporating icebreakers and other activities to get to know one another. One activity I have done during the first week that students enjoy is a “person scavenger hunt,” where students match a fun fact with a classmate. I also participate in the game. The students move around the class, interact with each other, and often laugh at some of the fun facts. The playfulness of the activity helps students feel at ease at the beginning of the semester, which facilitates a comfortable, safe, and enjoyable classroom environment.

In addition to establishing rapport, I create a class agreement to further facilitate a safe space in the classroom. During the first week of the semester, I ask the class, “What are some norms we want to agree on that can make our discussions and role-playing positive?” Possible responses include “be present,” “be respectful of all perspectives,” “only one person talking at a time,” “be honest,” and “no teasing.” I would also encourage the class to discuss how they will treat texts, especially those that may conflict with their worldviews. This helps facilitate attitudes of respect and openness toward the readings themselves. Each class creates their own agreement that should be either written or typed during class to reference later when discussions could be particularly controversial or role-playing could be particularly vulnerable.

After this first stage of establishing rapport and positive attitudes, students move to the second stage of Deardorff’s model, gaining knowledge of their own cultural context as well as learning about other cultures. To allow students to examine their own cultural backgrounds, I ask students to list the cultures they belong to, and the identities they have, with prompts such as religion, race, gender, and socio-economic status, among others. Then, I ask students to reflect on this exercise by writing about which culture or identity they identify with most and the one they identify with least and why. Students share these reflections with classmates, in groups or as a whole class, to bring awareness to the diversity, or lack thereof, in the class.

Once the students consider the cultural narratives that shape them, they are ready to learn about other cultures, and the primary way of doing this in the class is through reading diverse texts. The readings in my class span ancient Greece and China to twentieth-century Egypt and America. In my most recent iteration of the class, instead of organizing the course chronologically, I organized the readings around five themes: Identity and Purpose; Race, Ethnicity, and Gender; Love; Heroism and Virtue; and Justice and Injustice. Since I organized the course thematically, we approach each text as its own voice laden with its own cultural contexts, which we explore as necessary with the goal being to more clearly hear the text’s distinct voice. For instance, when reading Mahmoud Darwish’s poem
“Identity Card,” we learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to better understand how he formed his identity in the absence of a homeland, in exile. When reading Dante’s *Inferno*, we discuss the role of Catholicism in the Middle Ages and how that informs Dante’s perspective of justice and injustice. So, we study the cultural environment of a text as it serves to better understand the text’s meaning.

Cultural competence begins to truly take root in the third stage, and for this stage I propose incorporating role-play. In the previous stage, students have already been practicing listening to other cultural voices in the readings with respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery. However, cultural competence requires more than respectful listening; it requires a deeper sense of understanding, sympathy, and empathy. German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer describes this phase of the interpretative process as transformative: “What is at issue here is that when something other or different is understood, then we must also concede something, yield—in certain limits—to the truth of the other. That is the essence, the soul of my hermeneutics: To understand someone else is to see the justice, the truth, of their position. And this is what transforms us” (152). Role-playing is a powerful way of facilitating this “internal shift.”

Despite perceived stigmas of role-playing in college classes, many universities are doing it with great success through Reacting to the Past (RTTP) curriculum. Barnard History Professor Mark Carnes created RTTP, an extensive student-led role-playing game based on historical events: “Students learn by taking on roles, informed by classic texts, in elaborate games set in the past; they learn skills—speaking, writing, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and teamwork—in order to prevail in difficult and complicated situations” (“Curriculum”). Instead of reenacting the historical event, students make real decisions and give speeches to persuade other characters to their argument, so during the game the outcome of the event could change from what happened historically. The games are complex. Students become oriented to the historical context, take on historical personas with objectives to achieve and ideas to promote, study rich texts, and engage in “intellectual collisions” where they have to persuade others (Proctor 11-12). First disseminated in 2001, RTTP has since won numerous awards, and faculty across the world, and across a variety of disciplines, use it.

In designing role-play in my world literature class, I have adapted concepts and pedagogy from RTTP. Instead of role-playing a historical event, students role-play characters and authors from texts centered around one of the course themes. Keeping with RTTP’s concept of real decision-making, instead of reenactment, the same holds true for role-playing in this course. While students in my course would not be making decisions in a game format, they would be embodying characters or authors to discuss the theme, or an issue related to the theme, in more depth. After reading each text in the unit and discussing them as a class, the instructor breaks the students into groups and divides the readings among groups. For instance, in the Race, Gender, and Ethnicity unit, I assign each group one of the following texts: James Baldwin’s “Notes of a Native Son,” Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative*, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of
Woman, Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, and Jamaica Kincaid’s “Girl.” Each of the groups is responsible, then, for conducting in-depth character analyses. In this example, most of the readings are non-fiction, so students would also read historical and biographical texts to understand the cultural contexts. Similar to Reacting to the Past’s format, I compile these supplementary readings and provide them to students.

After thoroughly reading and researching their assigned character/author, students are ready to discuss. This “role-play discussion” works well with a fishbowl format. One member from each group sits in a circle while the other group members sit outside the inner circle. (For instance, one of Virginia Woolf’s group members would sit in a circle with each of the other author personas—Douglass, Baldwin, etc. The other Woolf group members would sit behind the student in the circle, so they are ready to rotate into the circle when I alert them to do so.) I pose a question to those in the circle. The questions always relate to the theme, but they could be large in scope and complexity or more specifically related to a current event or issue. For instance, a few questions from the “Identity and Purpose” unit may include “What does it mean to be human?”, “What is our purpose?”, and “How would you describe your identity?” Additionally, a few questions from the “Heroism and Virtue” unit may include “Who do you admire and why?”, “What qualities should humans strive to cultivate?”, “How can we cultivate these virtues?”, and “How do your ideas of heroism and virtue compare with modern American culture?” The students in the circle use their understanding about the character/author to respond, and each student must provide reasoning that clearly aligns with the character/author/text. The group members outside the circle actively listen to the discussion and take notes on what they could add. After a few minutes, I ask students to rotate, so new students role-play each character/author/text and the discussion continues.

This role-playing approach aligns with both the third and fourth stages of Deardorff’s cultural competence model by forcing students to set aside their opinions, put themselves in the mindset of the character/author, and communicate effectively in intercultural dialogue. Students may have strong opinions, so it could be a challenge to set aside those opinions and respond from another’s perspective. This uncomfortable process, though, builds sympathy and empathy. During the discussion, students must “yield” to the “truth of the other,” as Gadamer puts it (152). Additionally, as the students engage in discussion in their respective character/author roles, they are learning how to effectively communicate and act in an intercultural environment. Incorporating time to debrief after the role-play discussion further enforces Deardorff’s fourth stage.

Debriefing is essential for students to reflect on their experience during role-playing. This can be an open discussion, or students could reflect individually in writing first, before an open class discussion. I ask the students, “What was the role-playing experience like for you?”, “Was it difficult or easy? Explain your response”, and “Did it change your opinion of your character/author, or another character/author in the discussion? Why or why not?” During the debrief, students share challenges they experienced in empathizing with the character/author, or challenges to communicating in an intercultural environment.
Again, this final step is necessary because it allows students to recognize their own barriers to effectively engaging in intercultural situations, which enables them to grow in the cultural competence process.

**Cultural Competence as Sacred Endeavor**

When reflecting on using this model in my course, I began to consider if developing cultural competency at a Christian institution would be a distinct process. Thus, I theologically examined Deardorff’s model to see how it embraces or conflicts with Christian tenets, and what implications this would have for implementing this model in Christian higher education. To do this, I looked at the anthropological assumptions constructing the conceptual framework of Deardorff’s model alongside Karl Barth’s Christian anthropology. While Deardorff isn’t claiming to make an anthropological statement, her model is anthropological in its involvement of human beings and interactions between them.

One of the anthropological assumptions within the conceptual framework of Deardorff’s model is that human beings are not naturally capable of effective and appropriate intercultural exchange. Deardorff asserts, “Intercultural competence, unfortunately, does not ‘just happen’ for most: instead, it must be intentionally addressed” (“Theory Reflections”). To develop a model that instructs others on how to develop cultural competency, she assumes that the process of cultural competency is not natural, or inherent, to human beings. The necessity of cultural competence development and training suggests human fallibility.

While Barth’s anthropology embraces human fallibility, it contradicts Deardorff’s assumption that intercultural exchange is not natural to human beings. Intercultural competence has a relational element; to be successful, there needs to be at least two people working together. A core tenet of Barth’s anthropology is that humans are inherently relational: “The fundamental determination of the human being is to be found in his being in relation with God,” says Barth (3: 135). Since humans are defined by their relationship with God, they are designed for relationship. In this way, Barth would disagree that intercultural exchange is an unnatural process. However, because of humans’ sinful nature, he would agree that intercultural competence requires intentional effort, but successful intercultural relationships are a return to our truest selves, how God originally created us.

Deardorff’s model also assumes there are no commonalities between two different cultures. Instead of beginning her model by assuming similarities, the model begins only with the assumption that there are two people who are different, attempting to successfully interact. The only part of the model that conveys possible exploration of similarities between the cultures is in the “skills” stage when students “analyze, interpret, and relate” (“Theory Reflections”; italics mine). However, this acts as only one step of the process; it does not foreground the process itself. While students may consider how they relate to the target
culture, it is tangential to the process.

Barth’s anthropology, on the other hand, begins with a commonality between all human beings—\textit{imago Dei}. Barth writes,

> The final and last word about God but also about \textit{man} is spoken in Him [Jesus Christ]. Whoever hears this word, knows man—NB: not only himself, personally, but together with knowing himself, also his fellow human being who might not hear this word yet or not yet accurately—everybody, all human beings, man in and of himself. ("The Christian Life" 4: 28)

Whether Christian or not, Barth asserts we are all created in the image of God, which foregrounds our diversity. It is impossible to understand who man is, unless first understanding his creation in relation to God. Therefore, by knowing Jesus, we can know ourselves and our “fellow human being.”

This theological analysis offers insight on how Christian universities should uniquely approach cultural competence. First, if we begin with the belief that those engaged in intercultural exchange are both sinful and relational by nature, the process is more hopeful. We don’t have to be surprised or discouraged by difficulties that arise. While we can expect missteps along the way, we can also rest in the truth of our original relational design, believing that we can and will have successful intercultural exchange if we commit to the process. Also, acknowledging that all human beings are prone to sin, but designed for relationship, helps to equalize the exchange, and begin from a place of compassion and understanding.

This posture of commonality, instead of difference, is how Christian colleges should begin the discussion of intercultural exchange. As Barth says, “There is a humanity common to the Christian and non-Christian to which [the Christian Church] must relate itself, which it must presuppose, which it must take into account in its message, [...] and which it must above all know and take seriously as such” (3: 279). Beginning a dialogue by perceiving someone of another culture as an Other, or different from oneself, pollutes the exchange before it begins. On the other hand, entering into an intercultural exchange believing in the fundamental similarity of each human being created in the image of God disassembles hierarchy, humbles, and enables those present to truly listen, and, therefore, truly learn from one another. This is distinct about the cultural competence process at a Christian institution.

Lastly, the purpose of cultural competence shifts when viewed from a Christian perspective. According to Deardorff, the purpose of intercultural competence is “to achieve one’s goals to some degree” (“Theory Reflections”). This purpose focuses only on the initiator of intercultural exchange and his/her interests and gains. It focuses on what one can get or achieve, instead of what one can learn. In contrast, Barth suggests opening oneself to the possibility of divine revelation amidst intercultural exchange, whether the exchange is with a Christian or not. Sven Ensminger, teaching fellow at the University of St. Andrews, notes that Barth’s position is “characterized by openness to God’s revelation being
possible *extras euros ecclesial* [outside of Church walls] and using unexpected means for revelation, a critical attitude towards any religion, especially one’s own, the reminder of the inherent dignity bestowed upon all human beings” (242). In light of Barth’s theology, intercultural exchange becomes a sacred endeavor as one approaches another culture with humility and a willingness and eagerness to learn, anticipating God to reveal Himself in ways previously unknown.

**Christian Higher Education as Leaders of Diversity and Inclusion**

Universities worldwide are increasing efforts to develop cultural competence—study abroad programs, academic programs, global institutes, and centers for diversity and inclusion, among others. At the same time, humanities education is losing funding and legitimation. However, as Nussbaum argues, it is humanities education that develops global citizens, students who are able to interact in an intercultural world. Thus, universities should reconsider their cultural competence efforts, placing more emphasis on the humanities. This essay extends Nussbaum’s argument by showing how a World Literary Types course can be taught in a way that develops cultural competence. Instead of simply gaining information about cultures through the course readings, role-playing can powerfully connect students to the readings from various cultural contexts and develop students’ sympathy and empathy, a pivotal step toward cultural competence. Additionally, as the theological analysis proves, this process is distinct at a Christian university.

It is clear that universities—both Christian and secular—are lacking in intercultural understanding and communication. However, because of their biblically based missions, Christian institutions have an even greater responsibility and call to be leaders of diversity and inclusion within higher education. Hopefully, Christian scholars and administrators will re-examine how they’re developing culturally competent students, and a culturally competent campus, and maximize the powerful potential of the humanities in this ongoing quest. Additionally, Christian scholars and administrators can thoughtfully reflect upon how they are approaching, teaching, and speaking about cross-cultural understanding to align with theological beliefs. Such teachers and institutions will not only train students to successfully interact in cross-cultural environments, but also develop students who reveal the spirit of Christ in the way they humbly, compassionately, and assuredly seek “the truth of the other” (Gadamer 152).

**Works Cited**


Kelly Leavitt 27


Faith and Learning in Discussion with the Apostle Paul

Matthew C. Easter

Surveys of religiosity in America show an increasing number of what have been called the “nones.” The “nones” are those who identify no religious affiliation on their census data. This is the fastest growing “religious” group in America. Nationwide, the “nones” grew from just under 45% of the population in 1990 to over 51% in 2010. In St. Louis, the “nones” grew from nearly 42% in 1990 to almost 54% in 2010. During this same time span, those claiming to be Evangelicals in St. Louis decreased from 23% in 1990 to 10.5% in 2010 (“St. Louis City County, MO Religion Statistics”). Most of our students at MBU were born in the late 1990s, and so they grew up in the middle of this religious decline. Much less scientific, in my discussions with others around MBU, most of us agree that probably close to 70% of our students are not followers of Jesus. If 70% sounds too high to you, I think it is safe to say that at least half of our students would not appear to be actively following Jesus. Our school reflects the community around us.

At the same time, our mission as a university is to be an “evangelical Christian, liberal arts institution” that offers degrees “in an environment where academic excellence is emphasized and a Biblically based Christian perspective is maintained.” We list as our first purpose: “To develop a personal philosophy of life and an ethical and spiritual commitment which is based upon an awareness of alternatives and which is examined in the light of Biblical revelation.” Our fifth purpose hopes for our students “to become contributors to society in a manner consistent with Christian principles.” Here at MBU, “we are serious and intentional about our Christian faith,” as our core values state (“MBU Mission and Values”). Insofar as we fail to integrate our teaching with our faith, therefore, we fail to live out the mission of the university.

We can perceive the high number of unbelieving students as a threat or as an opportunity to our mission. The approximately 70% of unbelieving students at our school will indeed be a threat to our mission if we expect them to lead the charge. If we expect our students to champion our Christian mission, purposes, and values without our intervening direction, then the high number of unbelieving students is indeed a threat to our mission. Here’s the truth: there is no such thing as a seeker. No one is seeking God on their own accord. The Apostle Paul – who is quoting from the Psalms—says as much in Romans 3:10-11: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.” This claim matched Paul’s own faith story. Paul writes in Philippians 3:4-6: “If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of
Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” Notice that Paul is not burdened with a guilty conscience. Prior to the revelation of Christ in his life, Paul was not seeking God. In fact, Paul was quite happy with himself. After all, he calls himself “blameless.” This, I think, is where many of our students are. They are living unreflecting lives, generally content with themselves. They are certainly not seeking God. And we should not expect them to be. As Paul says elsewhere, apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit, we are “dead in the trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). Dead people don’t seek God. Those who are “dead in the trespasses and sins” most certainly do not seek to create “an environment where academic excellence is emphasized and a Biblically based Christian perspective is maintained.” We cannot expect our students to live out our Christian mission without the preemptive work of the Spirit invading their lives, as Christ did for Paul on the road to Damascus. If we expect otherwise, then our unbelieving students are indeed a threat to our university’s mission.

If, however, we as faculty commit to be the leaders—if we as faculty commit to integrate our teaching with our faith—then the high number of unbelieving students is in fact an opportunity. Indeed, the mission for every follower of Jesus is to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19), and God has brought the nations to our campus! God has given each of us an opportunity to live out our God-given mission with a captive audience of students who are (hopefully) with us for four years. These four years of potential Gospel-discipling contact with a student can have eternity-altering implications. God has called you as individuals to make disciples, and he has placed us here together in this place to live out our university’s purpose of helping students “become contributors to society in a manner consistent with Christian principles.”

For the rest of my time, I’d like to explore with you what it looks like to integrate faith and learning. With the Apostle Paul as our guide, we can see six models for faith and learning. To be sure, Paul was not a university professor, but he understood himself as a teacher in his churches (1 Cor 4:17; Col 1:28; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; 3:10).

Model 1: Intentionally Sharing Your Faith (Acts 26; Romans 10:14)

The first model of faith and learning is that of intentionally sharing your faith. Paul shares his faith with King Agrippa in Acts 26, and insists in Romans 10:14, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” Paul was convinced that apart from the spoken word of God, no one will come to know God. Paul does not expect people to understand his faith through osmosis.

This speaks directly against the oft-quoted statement attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi: “Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.” It turns out that Francis never said this. No biography of Francis written within the first 200 years of his death mentions this saying (Galli). Francis never said to
preach the Gospel with words if necessary. On the contrary, Francis was known for preaching the Gospel with words as much as possible. He started his ministry preaching in local churches, and later preached in up to five villages a day, often outdoors. He preached atop bales of straw or boxes to whoever passed by. His preaching was both kind and severe. One early biographer wrote of Francis: “He denounced evil whenever he found it and made no effort to palliate it; from him a life of sin met with outspoken rebuke, not support. He spoke with equal candor to great and small” (Galli).

Both Paul and St. Francis appear convinced, then, that integrating faith and learning starts with intentionally sharing our faith with words. Indeed, I believe one of the biggest threats to fulfilling our mission as a Christian university is the false expectation that our faith will be caught without it being taught. We do not expect organic chemistry, the history of the French Revolution, or calculus to be caught without being taught. Neither should you expect your faith in Christ to be caught without being taught. If the Apostle Paul and Francis of Assisi are right (and I think they are), we should indeed preach the Gospel at all times, using words as much as possible. As professors, we should not be afraid to share the Gospel in the classroom. For the sake of clarity, here is what I mean by “the Gospel”:

The Holy God created us in his image to love us and have a relationship with him forever. Humans sinned and were separated from God. The gospel is God’s mission to restore that relationship. God accomplishes this restoration through the life, death, and resurrection of his son, Jesus, where he took our sin and conquered death. We respond to God’s call when we repent of our sins, trust in Christ alone, and follow him in the fellowship of his church, which results in forgiveness, joy, and a new and eternal life, realized ultimately in resurrection with Christ. God’s mission will be fulfilled as Spirit-filled men and women from every ethnicity follow Jesus together as his disciples: living and loving like Jesus and pleading with others to come and do the same.²

I understand that we are not preachers in the classroom (nor should we be), but we are explicitly fulfilling the mission of the university every time we share Jesus with students.

Model 2: Critiquing Socially-Accepted Norms from a Christian Perspective (Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Philippians 2:9-11; 3:20-21)

Second, Paul models faith and learning by critiquing socially-accepted norms from the perspective of the Gospel. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul critiques the idolatry and sexual misconduct of the culture. Paul questions the world’s wisdom in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, where he lays bare the “wisdom of this age” that is “doomed to pass away” (2:6). Those without the illumination of the Spirit cannot
understand spiritual things (2:14), but Paul encourages his hearers to rest in the confidence that they “have the mind of Christ” (2:16). Paul speaks in political terms in Philippians 3:20-21, where he writes, “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” Paul is engaging here in a polemic against the Roman imperial cult (Trebilco 5). The Philippians’ citizenship is not Rome, but heaven. Julius Caesar called himself “the common savior of human life.” Augustus was described as “a savior who put an end to war and established all good things.” Claudius was “savior of the world” and a “god who is savior and benefactor.” Nero minted coins declaring him “Lord of all the world” with “every knee on earth bowing to him” (Trebilco 5). Paul refuses to let the Roman emperors have this distinction, and insists instead that Jesus Christ is savior and Lord. Paul models a Christian confidence to speak out against the moral, philosophical, and political systems of the world, helping his churches identify the weaknesses of a world without the Gospel.

Critiquing socially-accepted norms fits our purposes of helping students “develop a personal philosophy of life and an ethical and spiritual commitment which is based upon an awareness of alternatives and which is examined in the light of Biblical revelation” and helping them “become contributors to society in a manner consistent with Christian principles.” In class and in our private discussions with students, it is our job to help them think critically about how Jesus expects his followers to live differently from the rest of the world. We should also prepare them to expect resistance. As the fifteenth-century Bohemian reformer Petr Chelčický reminds us, true Christians will always be despised by those seeking an earthly kingdom. The world operates by its own set of rules, but the church should understand itself as a fellowship of believers who gather to live a communal life of discipleship.

Model 3: Sharing God’s Heart for the Poor (Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 2:10)

Third, Paul models faith and learning by helping his churches see God’s heart for the poor. Often overlooked is Paul’s driving mission to raise funds for the Jerusalem church. He directed his churches to set aside a certain amount each week to give to the church in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-4). In 2 Corinthians 8-9, he spends two full chapters urging the Corinthians to give, and shames them by noting how the poor Macedonians gave generously despite their poverty. Paul helps the Roman church grasp the spiritual dimension behind their care for the poor in Jerusalem: “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings” (Rom 15:26-27). The poor church in Jerusalem gave spiritual blessings, so it is incumbent on the wealthy church in Rome to reciprocate with
material blessings. Paul wants to keep God’s heart for the poor in front of his churches.

Similarly, part of our role as teachers in a Christian university is to introduce our students to the heart of God. God’s heart is with the poor. This is evident throughout the Old Testament prophets, and we see this modeled in Paul. God is calling us to speak out for the helpless, the poor, and the oppressed. Our millennial students are already attuned to the cries of social justice. This interest in social justice is, indeed, one of the characteristics of the millennial generation, even if it is only “hashtag activism.” As followers of Jesus in this university setting, we integrate our faith and learning by showing a Christ-centered approach to social justice, helping students see God’s own desire for justice and how they can participate in this vital activity as ambassadors of Christ.

Model 4: Loving the Church (Romans 16:1-23; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 4:7-17; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1)

Fourth, Paul shows us that faith and learning must happen in the context of the church. Paul reminded his churches that they are not alone in their mission. A number of Paul’s letters are co-written with Timothy or Silvanus, and he often closes his letters with words of greeting to or from other believers. Paul used his friends to teach and encourage the churches, as he does with Tychicus in Colosse: “Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts” (Col 4:7-8). By using these fellow believers, Paul is helping his churches see their place in the larger movement of God.

A commitment to the gathered body of believers is one of the marks of being a Baptist. Our spiritual cousins, the Anabaptists, could not conceive of faith apart from the community of believers. This instinct is shared by Baptists. For example, the early Anabaptist Dirk Philips numbered “shared communal love” among his seven ordinances of the church. For Philips, “pure brotherly love is a sure sign of genuine faith and true Christianity.” This brotherly love involves rebuking sinners for their own good, as well as bearing one another’s spiritual and physical burdens. Philips insists that this is a clear mark delineating the true church from false Christianity. If we neglect the church, then we are neglecting our very faith in Christ (Freeman et al., 61-67).

Many Christian students disconnect from church in college. Those moving to the area may never find a new church home, while the local students may find themselves cast into the nebulous “college and career” Sunday School class filled with a couple of students with a few other awkward 20- and 30-somethings. One of the best ways for us to integrate our faith with our teaching is to encourage our students to get plugged into a local church. I still remember a professor telling me, “Find a church when you are in school and start serving. It doesn’t matter if you are working with 4-year-olds—just find a place to serve.” We can be that same voice to our students. If they try following Jesus alone—
even at an “evangelical Christian, liberal arts institution” such as MBU—they will inevitably fail. Likewise, if we as professors are trying to integrate our faith and learning without being connected to our own local churches, we also will inevitably fail.

**Model 5: Bridging the Cultural Gap (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Galatians 2:8-10)**

Fifth, Paul models the integration of faith and learning by bridging the cultural gap. Paul considered himself an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:8-10) and claimed to become all things to all people in hopes of saving some (1 Cor 9:22). As a Jew, Paul crossed both ethnic and religious barriers to reach out to the Gentiles (1 Cor 9:21), yet he maintained his distinct Jewishness to minister to Jews (1 Cor 9:20).

Probably the most famous Baptist hero who bridged the cultural gap is Lottie Moon. Lottie Moon was born into a wealthy family in 1840. She was raised in a Christian home and benefited from a fine education. A few years after graduating from college, Lottie moved to Tengchow, China, to minister. She labored for thirty-nine years, chiefly in Tengchow and Pingtu, China. She broke the mold of a typical missionary of her time. Many missionaries tried to convert others to Americanism as much as to Christ. Instead, Lottie Moon adopted traditional Chinese dress and learned China’s language and customs. Lottie didn’t just serve the people of China; she identified with them. Many eventually accepted her, and some accepted her Savior. She spent her entire life working with Chinese people. Many missionaries came and went, but Lottie kept working until her death. In 1912, during a time of war and famine, Lottie gave all of her food to the starving Chinese as she silently starved herself to death (McBeth 416-19). Lottie Moon bridged the cultural gap and gave her life for the sake of the Gospel.

Missouri Baptist University is blessed with diversity. MBU has provided you and me with plenty of opportunities to cross cultural barriers to love students who are different from ourselves. If we are not reaching out to all students of all races and cultural backgrounds, we are not adequately integrating our faith with our teaching. As we reach out to those different from ourselves, we also should encourage our students to do the same. The Bible’s vision of the heavenly realm is one in which, as John the Revelator says, “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, [is] standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Rev 7:9-10) Heaven is populated by people of every ethnicity, and God is calling us as professors to live this out on earth by bridging the cultural gap, reaching out to students of every background. It is also our job to share with students opposed to this ethnic diversity in heaven that they probably are not going there anyway.
Model 6: Leading by Example (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9)

Finally, the sixth model of faith and learning in Paul is that of leading by example. Paul urges the believers in Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica to imitate him. Paul felt confident leading by example, because he was following the example of Jesus, as he says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

NBA star Charles Barkley famously said, “I’m not paid to be a role model.” Fellow NBA star Karl Malone’s response to Barkley is one we should hear again: “We don’t choose to be role models, we are chosen. Our only choice is whether to be a good role model or a bad one” (“I’m Not a Role Model”). Like it or not, Malone is right. As faculty, we are role models. Our students may never admit that to you, but be assured that they are watching you. Our only choice is indeed whether to be a good role model or a bad one. Let us be like the Apostle Paul, who imitated Christ. Practically speaking, what does this look like? It looks like wearing our Christian faith on our sleeves. Do not keep your faith private. Talk about the church you attend (and if you don’t attend one, start this Sunday). Talk about what you are reading in Scripture (and if you don’t read the Bible, start tonight). Talk about the mission experiences you are having. In other words, be the follower of Jesus you would want your students to be, and help them see those qualities in yourself.

Conclusion: Faith and Learning Is about Living a Christ-centered Life (Galatians 2:19-20; Colossians 3:3)

My task today was to explore the integration of faith and learning. Looking at the Apostle Paul, we find six models: (1) Intentionally sharing your faith; (2) Critiquing socially-accepted norms from a Christian perspective; (3) Sharing God’s heart for the poor; (4) Loving the church; (5) Bridging the cultural gap; and (6) Leading by example.

The truth is, though, if the Apostle Paul were here today and I shared this list with him, he would probably be confused. Why would I give six models? Why not just one? I say this because, for Paul, all six of these models would fall under one big reality: Paul understood himself as a dead man. Paul could not conceive of his life as being his own any longer. For Paul, history has changed in Christ. God in Christ has broken into our world, and the things of this world no longer matter. As Paul says in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” For Paul, every aspect of our life must only be understood in light of our identity as a follower of Jesus. We are dead people, as he tells the church in Colossae, “for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:3).
So, the entire concept of integrating my faith into my teaching is flawed from the start. My faith is not integrated into anything. Instead, everything is viewed in light of my faith. My identity in Christ comes first—I am crucified with Christ; I’m a dead person—and everything else in life should be lived out as an expression of Christ living in me. Faith and learning should not need to be integrated. If we are truly living cruciform lives, then our faith and our roles as professors should be integrated already. If our faith and our teaching are not integrated, we should not start with trying our hand at one of the six models I’ve given you. Integrating faith and learning does not mean we devote one week to sharing God’s heart for the poor, one week for intentionally sharing our faith, one week for leading by example, etc. No, if we want to integrate our faith and learning, we should start at the foot of the cross, and recognize that we have died with Jesus on that cross, and “[our] life is hidden with Christ in God.” Once we get this life-altering reality in place—that we are crucified with Christ, and the lives we live we live by the faithfulness of the Son of God—then faith and learning should fall into place. We no longer teach with hopes of integrating our faith. Instead, we cannot conceive of anything in life apart from our faith. As crucified disciples, we are dead to ourselves and live as Christ’s faithful presence on earth, inviting our students to follow King Jesus with us.

Notes

1 This essay was originally delivered as a presentation to the Missouri Baptist University faculty on 17 August 2017. The tone reflects this original context. My thanks to MBU Provost, Dr. Arlen Dykstra, for the invitation to speak.

2 This description of the Gospel is a modified version of a definition created by the pastoral staff at Canaan Baptist Church in St. Louis, MO.

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THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

How to Engage Students of Different Perspectives: Lessons from Acts 17:16-34

Matthew C. Easter

Our students at Missouri Baptist University come from all facets of our community. Just as our community is filled with people who do not yet know God, so also God has brought students into our offices, onto our teams, and into our classrooms who do not yet have a relationship with God. Whenever we teach, coach, or counsel students, we cannot assume that everyone already agrees with our Christian worldview. I think this is great! Each of these students is a gift from God, and God is entrusting us to shepherd them academically, professionally, and spiritually. I believe God is watching us as a university to see if we will be good stewards of these gifts – these students – that God is giving us.

How shall we approach a unique community such as MBU with students of such different perspectives? The Apostle Paul shows us a way forward in how he deals with the Athenians in Acts 17:16-34.

Paul is speaking to a group of people who have radically different presuppositions from his own. Luke (the author of Acts) describes Athens as “full of idols” (Acts 17:16), which correlates with ancient accounts describing the Athenian marketplace lined with idols (Bock 560-61). Paul’s discussion partners in Acts 17 are the Epicurean and the Stoic philosophers. Neither group understood Paul’s preaching about Jesus and the resurrection (17:18). The Epicureans were thoroughgoing materialists. They denied the existence of a soul or an afterlife. The gods have no control over the world and no concern for humans, so the wise person lives without fear of a god or fear of death. For the Epicureans, life’s goal is to live as free from pain as possible (Bartholomew and Goheen 56-57). The Stoics, on the other hand, had a high view of divine providence, believing that everything is predestined. Wisdom is resigning oneself to the predetermined fate of the world, living emotionless, especially when faced with hardship. The wise person is free of guilt, fear, desire, or pleasure, because he knows that his feelings will not change fate anyway (Bartholomew and Goheen 55-56).

Paul’s context is not much different from ours. Our students may not identify as an Epicurean or a Stoic, but each time a student says YOLO (“You Only Live Once”) or “It is what it is,” they reveal their Epicureanism or Stoicism respectively. While, unlike in Athens, traditional idols do not decorate the halls
of our local shopping malls, an outsider could be excused for mistaking the fast fashion, sparkling jewelry, and handheld gadgets as physical representations of our gods. Athens was not a Christian city, but neither is our city. Here in St. Louis County, only 10.54% of people identified as “evangelical” in the 2010 census, while 53.85% identified “no religious affiliation” (“St. Louis City County, MO Religion Statistics”). The vast majority of our neighbors are not followers of Jesus. This means that you and I are missionaries in a dark land. We must have “missionary eyes” when we look at our student body (cf. Searcy and Easter 23-24). Paul’s encounter at the Areopagus in Acts 17 offers three principles for how to engage with those of differing perspectives.

Principle 1: Start Soft

Paul is speaking to a hostile crowd. Paul was angry, having been “provoked” by the rampant idolatry of the city (17:16). The philosophers called Paul “a babbler” (17:18), which in the ancient context connoted “a person who picks up bits of information and passes them off as if he knows what he is talking about” (Bock 561-562). Paul’s audience fashioned themselves intellectual elites, who already know everything they need to know. They consider Paul a foolish “preacher of foreign divinities” (17:18), but in fact they are the ones who “spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (17:21). Despite the acrimonious setting, Paul starts soft. Paul does not start on the attack, but opens his address by noting, “I perceive that in every way you are very religious” (17:22). When speaking to a group Paul knows are Christians, he takes a much harsher tone against pagan religion (cf. Romans 1:20-23), but when speaking to a group of pagans he starts soft.

Similarly, we as faculty and staff at MBU cannot assume that every student agrees with our university’s mission. Sure, most of our students are far too polite to call us a “babbler” or a “preacher of foreign divinities,” but to many students this is precisely what we are. Like Paul, we do well to start soft with the students, rather than attacking straightaway their perceptions of the world. For example, if teaching, do not go into the classroom guns-blazing, throwing out unchecked truisms. If we do, this reckless behavior can lead to at least two problems. On the one hand, this teaches our students who agree with us to speak and act the same way. On the other hand, it marginalizes and closes off possible discussion with those students who disagree with us. In the effort to start soft, I imagine that someone sitting in the crowd completely disagrees with me and has very different presuppositions than I do. Then, I pretend that I am speaking to that person face-to-face. If I would not use a certain tone of voice, metaphor, or line of argumentation face-to-face with that person, then I do not use it when I am teaching. Instead, I ask myself: “How would I, in the love of Christ, have a discussion with this person? What presuppositions or reasons might this person have informing their position? How can I engage with this person in a generous way to win them over?”
**Principle 2: Acknowledge the Truth in Their Position, Meeting Them Where They Are**

Paul notes that the Athenians are praying to an “unknown god” (17:23). Paul uses this “monument to polytheism” (Bock 565) as common ground to tell them that the unknown god they are worshipping is in fact the one true God (17:23). He acknowledges the truth in their position, namely, that there is a God unknown to them. He explains that this God who made the world does not live in human-made temples, a claim which would have resonated with the Greek philosophers who spoke in a similar manner (Bock 565). After this, he quotes their poets, and so meets them on their terms. The unknown god they are worshipping is not far off, for “[i]n him we live and move and have our being.” This was a common Greek saying (Polhill 375). Paul adopts language from the Stoic poet Aratus of Soli, who referred humanity’s sharing in Zeus’s divine nature by saying, “For we are his offspring” (Polhill 376). From our perspective, we can see how everything Paul is saying is rooted in the Old Testament (Polhill 370). Paul is not speaking about our shared life in Zeus, but of the Creator God (Yahweh). Nevertheless, Paul is meeting them on their terms. He is not backing down from what he believes, but setting them up to know the truth, in terms they will understand.

Similarly, we cannot expect the typical student to have the wisdom and experience of a middle-aged adult. Many students are working through what it means to be an individual contributing to society. We should allow them space to grow. They are going to say the wrong things in class. They are going to miss deadlines. They are going to manage their finances poorly. None of this is acceptable, but we need to meet them where they are first, take them by the hand, and guide them to where they need to be. This is particularly true when addressing spiritual issues.

**Principle 3: Do Not Compromise the Truth, and Call for a Response**

Finally, Paul attacks. He returns to the theme of ignorance from earlier: God had previously overlooked their ignorance, but now it is time to repent (17:30). The “babbler” is calling the philosophers to account for their ignorance. Paul has gone in soft, he has met them where they are, but now he insists that they cannot stay there. The “unknown god” is no longer “unknown,” so now it is time to give up their false worship and follow the true God. For the first time Paul starts using language foreign to Athenian ears by speaking of a “judgment day,” “repentance,” and “resurrection” (17:31; Polhill 378). Paul introduces this unfamiliar language and calls for a response. Luke admits that some mocked Paul, but others said, “We will hear you again about this” (17:32).

In the same manner, we must never back off from the truth. We are called by God to shepherd our students academically, professionally, and spiritually. No good shepherd lets a sheep wander the wilderness without boundaries or direction. So also with our students, God is asking us to be patient, but guide them to the
truth. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:22 that he had “become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.” This “becoming all things to all people,” I would suggest, is more than trying to look trendy or relevant. Instead, I would argue that in our university context “becoming all things to all people” means having the intellectual chops and rhetorical commitment to engage with students where they are intellectually and philosophically, recognizing that not every student agrees with us already, and then from this basis guiding them to the truth. As Bock notes, “Paul knows his own message and the mentality of the people he evangelizes. Too many Christians know their own message but understand far too little about how and why others think as they do” (Bock 573).

I encourage you to join me in this challenge: the next time you interact with students, imagine you are speaking to someone in the group who fundamentally disagrees with you. Start soft, acknowledge the truth in their position, meet them where they are, and then find a Christ-centered love-driven intellectually-stimulating way to guide them to the truth.

Note

1 This talk was delivered at the in-service training for the faculty and staff of Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis, MO, 22 February 2017. The tone of this article reflects the orality and training context of the original presentation. I thank Dr. Arlen Dykstra, Provost of MBU, for the invitation to speak at the training.

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Book Reviews


Reviewed by Chris Buckles

Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. The one who can recognize, desire, and delight in the things in heaven and earth that reflect these attributes of God is blessed with contentment and joy. These three pillars are high and timeless ideals. To recognize truth means one can live a life undeceived by the false promises of a fallen world, for they know “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). To desire goodness means one has an appetite that will “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Mark 5:6). To delight in beauty means one has rightly placed affections that will “long, yes, faint for the courts of the LORD” (Psalm 84:2). Training our eyes to be clear, appetites to be proper, and affections to be well ordered was the aim of education at its birth, and what followed for many centuries was what was known as the classical liberal arts approach to education, which was meant to form the well-rounded human being.

When one hears of classical education, there are a few things that may come to mind: classical languages like Latin and Greek, classical literature like Homer’s *Iliad* and Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, or classical music from Beethoven and Mozart. The first thing that comes to mind for most is this idea of highly prized works of art that emerged out of minds we could only describe as genius. In some sense, we are not far off. The only difference is that these highly prized works were not merely the product of natural gifting, but the fruit of a long lost educational paradigm that is beginning to sprout once again around the nation.

In Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain’s book, *The Liberal Arts Tradition*, they make the next attempt at breaking down this lost form of education that produced such figures as Martin Luther and Thomas Jefferson. A Liberal Arts education was indeed the standard of education in the Western world since its origins in Ancient Greece. The idea behind a liberal education is that it would free, or liberate, the mind to grasp meaning, make sound judgements, and reason autonomously. With an education such as this, man could truly think for himself, understand his place in the world, and seek to better align his passions with God’s created world. In Clark and Jain’s book, they present the stages by which one would enter into being liberally educated, the Christian virtues prized in this education, and the ultimate applicability of this mode of education in our schools today.

Before going into the particulars of each component, they provide the reader with an overview of the paradigm they will be presenting. It begins with a
big idea that a Christian classical education is “grounded in piety and governed by theology” (5). What they mean by this is that this form of education deals in training students to love the things of God and prize the truth of His Word above all else. Other disciplines are involved, such as math, science, and history, but we learn these subjects to gain a better view of the creator and cultivate our worship of Him. The authors sum up by giving a summary of the more particular disciplines and practices involved in classical learning: Music, Gymnastics, Liberal Arts, Philosophy, and Theology. These categories end up being the major sections by which they go into detail on how classical study is meant to achieve this aim of cultivating worship.

It becomes quite clear at this first juncture that the paradigm of Christian classical education is far different from our modern forms of education. Whereas, in modern education, vocational training and socialization are the hallmarks, this model begins with piety. Even the word piety seems archaic in our day, and the authors of the book say as much. What they mean by piety is “the duty, love, and respect owed to God, parents, communal authorities past and present” (10). The idea is to teach students to take ownership of their place in God’s world, with responsibility, rather than entitlement, and humble reverence for our debt to the past, rather than discarding our heritage in the name of progress. Many clear references are made to the definition and place of piety in classical culture, with specific quotes from Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin, all to finally synthesize what piety is into the following statement: “the proper love and fear of God and man” (14). This idea as the backbone of one’s education is profound, for the absence of this proper ordering of loves and fears is the central cause of sin and social disorder. All sin is rooted in rebellion against God, whom we ought to love, and in fear of man, which “lays a snare” (Prov 29:25). Our heart’s predisposition to care more about our own comforts and the opinion of man is the exact disease the Lord seeks to sanctify in us by means of a Christian classical education.

The question of how we begin to cultivate this kind of condition in students is the next point of discussion, as the authors examine the role of gymnastics and music. The best summation of the concepts is given in its subheading in the introduction where they give action to these ideas as “The Training of the Bodies and The Tuning of the Hearts” (5). The idea behind gymnastics in an early liberal arts education is not to learn cartwheels or somersaults, but rather to give the body discipline and self-control. Likewise, music at this stage has little to do with learning scales and notes, but focuses on acquiring a taste for that which is harmonious with God’s design. These two components are especially important in the early, formative years of education. Gaining control over one’s body can be difficult, and is what little children spend much of their early lives working to do. It is important to carry on the work of piety, as our bodies are often getting in the way of a pursuit of righteousness and wisdom. Thus, the “proper use of one’s body is central to the moral and spiritual life” (25). Likewise, immersing students in the poetry and liturgy of the Christian life cultivates a familiarity. In summarizing Plato’s thoughts on the role of music in education, the authors say “the songs we sing, the stories we read, and the art
we make and admire, form our souls” (27). The goal at this stage in a classical
education is to cultivate a delight for learning in the student. By training their
bodies to be self controlled and captivating their hearts with what is good,
educating their minds will be an easy task.

Once piety, gymnastics, and music lay the foundation of wonder and
worship within a student, we are ready to begin the real work of the classical
student: the liberal arts. The seven liberal arts are split into two categories. The
trivium comprises the first three language liberal arts of grammar, dialectic, and
rhetoric, while the quadrivium comprises the last four mathematical liberal arts of
arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Although these arts are often
depicted as separate and distinct subjects in modern-day education, they were not
perceived as divided courses of study in classicism. Rather, they were seen as the
seven paths to obtaining wisdom, and all seven, though each could be emphasized
in its own right, were practiced and encountered together in all studies.

The trivium is the fundamental set of arts, as “all subsequent learning
proceeds from language” (37). The necessity of these language arts can be traced
back as far as Saint Augustine and Quintilian and is reflected well in their own
personal works. The trivium begins with grammar, which is typically given in
depth practice through learning Latin and Greek, but it happens to reach beyond
just these skills. As a liberal art, it is the path of apprehending facts that provide
the understandings necessary to make judgments and inferences. In addition to
learning how to find meaning in language, the students practice dialectic, “the art
of reasoning” (41). This is primarily mastered through the study of formal logic
and participation in Socratic dialogue. It is ultimately about leading the student to
recognize “which questions are worth asking, and which are worth answering”
(44). Finally, rhetoric, a word used in a variety of ways in our modern world, is
introduced as the epitome of linguistic study for the classical student. With
varying treatises and texts seeking to systematize the aims and approach to its
study from the ancient to medieval period, it is commonly agreed upon that it is
meant to train the student in the techniques involved in using language for
persuasion by “appealing to the reason, will, and affections of their audience”
(46). After summarizing what is meant by the liberal arts of the trivium, the
authors bring us back again to the Christian purpose of such study, by noting the
uniqueness of language to humankind and Christ’s recognition as the incarnate
“word” (λόγος).

As we move toward the quadrivium, the authors make clear that these four
mathematical liberal arts are actually quite complementary to their linguistic
counterparts, which is contrary to the modern understandings of their role in
education. Furthermore, the classical purpose for the study of mathematics was
not for its practical usefulness, but because it “leads the mind toward pure reason
and cultivates the true love of wisdom. By training one’s thoughts on the
perfections of mathematics, the mind learns to transcend the level of changing
opinions to identify objective truth” (53). This is done through arithmetic by
elevating the mind into the abstract realm of numbers and how they relate.
Geometry then moves numerical understandings into deductive proofs, forming
good habits in students for how they ought to think. These first two liberal arts,
arithmetic and geometry, would encompass all of our mathematical courses we offer in today’s schools, while the next two arts are more applied in their nature. Astronomy is meant “to make mathematical observations of data and to place them into a system” (72), much like our modern day empirical sciences, and music is meant to study the harmonic proportionalities that exist in sound, nature, and society, not simply in instrumental and vocal song. Again, even though we treat these four categories as distinct disciplines of study today, as liberal arts they are viewed as paths to wisdom and encompass a much broader realm of knowledge and skill than mere sums, shapes, stars, and songs.

Once classical students master the seven liberal arts, they are then ready to approach the cornerstone of human study: philosophy and theology. As many already know, the true definition of philosophy is “the love of wisdom” (88), which brings us back to our original theme of classicism, the cultivation of loves. Classical philosophy was far less about pretentious ponderings on life’s difficult questions, as it is often seen today, but was more focused on delighting in the pursuit of worthwhile knowledge in natural, moral, and divine matters. Natural philosophy is what we see today as science. However, the important distinction between modern science and classical natural philosophy has to do with the aim of the practitioner. In modern science, the purpose of discovery is to better learn how to control natural phenomena. In natural philosophy, the purpose is to make discovery for the sake of aligning one’s self into harmony with the natural world. Moral philosophy is the equivalent of modern ethics and social science. It was primarily about cultivating virtue in a person, which was already apparent by the ideals of Biblical piety outlined in scripture, as opposed to the more modern idea of a social contract. Finally, divine philosophy, or metaphysics, was “the study of being” (126). This deals in questions on how God relates to his creations. It is this final philosophical realm that begins to bridge the student into the study of theology.

As the authors arrive at this final stop in the course of a liberal arts education, they make very clear that, though there is a place for distinct courses in theology in the school, the study of theology ought to pervade every aspect of a Christian classical school. It should be well woven into the daily life of the curriculum and culture. One of the main distinctions made by the authors in classifying theology apart from divine philosophy is that theology is the “science of divine revelation” (135) and focused on hermeneutical interpretation of the Holy Word of God, making theology a body of knowledge that is objective, whereas divine philosophy holds the inferences made after understanding these objective truths. Though the book begins closing at this point, the authors state that “theology informs the curriculum at its foundations” (136), and all of our understandings about piety, gymnastic disciplines, musical liturgies, practice in the liberal arts, and approach to philosophy are grounded in what God has specially revealed to His people. As it is stated in Micah, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). Christian classical education begins and ends with God’s special revelation to man. Thus, it is not something dreamed up by man, but man’s attempt to better align the
education of a student with the decrees and promises of the gospel of Jesus Christ, not wasting the opportunity we have to disciple young children in the paths of wisdom and truth.

In the current conversation about Classical Christian Education, there are still many mysteries surrounding its actual approach and the way subjects were originally treated by classical teachers, especially in the Christian sphere. All we seem to know for certain is that it has a rich history and a high effectiveness in its ability to foster strong and creative thinkers. Clark and Jain have successfully analyzed the specific components of a liberal arts curriculum that has an integrated Christian identity. Most works about classical education in the past few decades have been quite vague, spending more time discussing the philosophy and purpose of this mode of education, with very little help on the actual implementation. This book gives clear categories and lengthy discussion on their role in a holistic educational model that is distinctly Christian. The stages of piety, gymnastic, and music that precede the liberal arts, and continue along with them, help one grasp the integrative nature of this education. As an educator in a classical Christian school, it was refreshing to find practical ideas on how to educate students with an aim to cultivate wisdom and virtue. Furthermore, the authors, being classical Christian educators themselves, share many helpful hints on how the ideals they are discussing actually end up playing out in their own teaching. Jain specifically gives his approach to biology or calculus, which can be far more elusive than the humanities. With these real world examples, the classical Christian model is finally finding its way to earth from the lofty heavens.

Finally, though it is helpful to classical educators, this book is not necessarily a teaching manual, and gives clear classification of the liberal arts tradition for one who is unfamiliar with this approach and may be interested in learning more. It puts concepts that are associated with the highest levels of academia in lay persons’ terms and offers helpful illustrations that make vivid the ends of a classical education. In the end, this work is accessible to all and filled with substantial references to the primary sources on which the authors based their findings, giving direction for anyone who wants to dig more deeply to better grasp this unique and timeless educational approach two thousand years in the making.

Reviewed by Matthew R. Bardowell

Heath W. Carter and Laura Rominger Porter’s *Turning Points in the History of American Evangelicalism* is a collection of original essays dedicated to Mark Noll, acclaimed church historian. The volume takes its title and its theme from Noll’s 1996 book entitled *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, in which he focuses on significant moments within the history of the church and considers how these moments coalesce around various individuals and events. In their introduction, the editors are careful to note that the essays collected here are not meant to tell a linear narrative of American evangelicalism, but rather each essay addresses “significant transitional moments of American religious history” (xvii). Limiting their scope to “American evangelicalism,” the editors argue for a broad conception of the evangelical movement. Referencing a text by historian Steven P. Miller, the editors remark that there is room enough in this category for “Marabel Morgan’s marriage seminars, Hal Lindsey’s prophecy guides, Tammy Faye Bakker’s eyelashes, and Thomas Kinkade’s oil paintings” (xiv). Thus, the editors, and indeed the contributors, appear to embrace a rather inclusive and complex view of American evangelicalism, and this generosity lends the book a feeling of sober confidence that permeates its pages. The chapters follow a roughly chronological structure. Thus, they are organized around the centuries they address, beginning with the eighteenth, moving into the nineteenth, and finishing in the twentieth.

Harry S. Stout, Jonathan Edwards Professor of American Religious History at Yale University, contributes the first chapter, “What Made the Great Awakening Great?” Stout frames the essay as a response to Jon Butler, who argues that the Great Awakening is something of a misnomer and that this particular “turning point” in the mid-eighteenth century has been manufactured by historians. Stout argues that this period of American history was indeed revolutionary with respect to church history, primarily as it passes through the persons of George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. Both men, suggests Stout, adopted Lockean ideas that influenced their approach to ministry. Whitefield’s influence on evangelicalism at the time stems from his appreciation and use of “sensationalism” in his preaching. As Stout puts it, Whitefield’s preaching “blurred the distinction between church and theater,” thus enabling his hearers to experience emotionally the truth of “New Birth” in Christ (4). Edwards, on the other hand, receives from Locke a mode of enlightenment thinking that he infuses in his theology. The result, argues Stout, is a kind of religious aestheticism that triumphs over the rationalism dominant up to mid-eighteenth century.
Continuing in the eighteenth century and Enlightenment thought, Catherine A. Brekus brings together the stories of three individuals, separated by location and circumstance but who each displayed a remarkable similarity in their evangelicalism (20). Brekus shows how each of the three individuals—“a goodwife, a minister, and a slave” (20)—rejected certain enlightenment ideas such as innate human goodness, the value of everyday life, and the pursuit of happiness” (42). Brekus argues that in resisting these potentially idolatrous ideologies, evangelicalism could offer those seeking answers to life’s deeper questions more substantial responses to the dominant philosophy of the day.

Jon Butler’s essay presents a “turning point” in the nineteenth century concerning the origins and development of disestablishmentarianism. Here Butler offers a historical account of the influences that led to wide acceptance of the severing of church and state. Butler covers a good deal of ground in his essay, ending with present Supreme Court cases that touch on the matter—such as Burwell vs. Hobby Lobby. Butler suggests that because the matter has been taken up haphazardly and unsystematically over time, American evangelicalism is doomed to the “Sisyphean struggle” of litigating and re-litigating what disestablishmentarianism means for “American politics and jurisprudence” (64).

In the following essay, “Antebellum Reform,” Richard Carwardine considers the reform impulses that animated evangelicalism in the pre-Civil War era of the United States. Carwardine offers a striking account of how both Northern and Southern evangelicals adopted a postmillennialist view of human progress that was rooted in “the well-established Wesleyan doctrine of perfectionism” (66). This doctrine of “entire sanctification” held that Christians might conform themselves to the image of Christ in ways that could result in a sinless life. Married to the “postmillennialism,” the doctrine of “entire sanctification” functioned to urge American evangelicals toward personal and governmental reform in the hopes of precipitating Christ’s return. Carwardine argues that this theological foundation was taken up by Northern abolitionists compelled to live out Christ’s benevolence in meaningful personal and political ways. Likewise, Southern evangelicals embraced a version of postmillennialism that viewed “encouraged political separation and gave it religious meaning” (82). Thus, Confederates saw political secession as a type of religious schism that would purge Protestantism of sin and error. Carwardine relates these events with great pathos, showing how such views contributed to the animus and violence that culminate in the Civil War.

Marguerite van Die addresses the antebellum period with a more narrow focus, concentrating on the role of domestic life in religious formation. To this end, van Die explores texts that address attitudes regarding family life in order to show that early- to mid-nineteenth century religious experience was, to a great extent, culturally conditioned by these domestic views. Domestic life, van Die argues, would have influenced views touching everything from relationships with the opposite sex, perceptions of gender, relationships within families, and conceptions of heaven (91-98). In a rich cultural analysis, van Die shows that merging the domestic and the spiritual transformed ideals into expectations. Given this blending of domestic ideals and religious thought, van Die suggests
that the “religious worlds” constructed during this time would have differed regionally based on domestic expectations.

Moving now to the end of the Civil War, Luke E. Harlow offers a historico-cultural answer to the question: “why [was] 11 o’clock Sunday morning [...] the most segregated hour of the week in American society” (132)? According to Harlow, the answer is found in the nineteenth-century evangelical attempt to make sense of “the Civil War and emancipation” (132). Using Abraham Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural Address,” Harlow ably shows how the ideological conflicts that animated the Civil War cut across evangelical lines as well as political and economic ones. At the root of the evangelical rationale for its proslavery position, Harlow argues, was a strict Biblicism that gave rise to conservative Protestantism. When liberal Protestants who had championed the abolitionist cause began to shift away from that same strict Biblicism, conservatives found refuge in the common sense approach to scripture that, to their minds, preserved orthodoxy. Harlow’s study here serves as a reminder of the work Christians yet have to do to reconcile deeply held but incompatible views on their faith and their society.

Advancing into the early twentieth century, George M. Marsden explores the consequences of U.S. involvement in the First World War on American evangelicalism. The cultural insecurity that conflict always brings, Marsden argues, contributed to a sense of “heightened militancy and uncompromising apocalyptic rhetoric” (140). According to Marsden, these qualities gave rise to American fundamentalism. Marsden offers an interesting reading of Lyman Stewart’s The Fundamentals to show the renewed sense of urgency evangelicals felt to defend the Bible as they understood it (144). Marsden then shows how similar fundamental concerns crop up in the decades after World War I.

Edith L. Blomhofer’s essay continues in the twentieth century but shifts focus to consider urban Pentecostalism. She asks, “Why did Pentecostalism establish itself so readily in Chicago?” (155). Blomhofer’s argues that the answer lies in “overlapping and interwoven webs of grassroots piety” present in Chicago between 1906 and 1912. These grassroots structures, Blomhofer notes, were so readily embraced because they were “sensitive to women’s voices […] racially inclusiv[e] and consisted of restless religious ‘insiders’ and perennial religious ‘outsiders’ (155-56). Blomhofer’s essay offers an insightful early account of regionally positioned forms of Pentecostalism, but she also demonstrates how this local movement wielded influence over the rest of American Pentecostalism as well as its reach to the wider world.

Dennis C. Dickerson explores the turning point of the Great Migration in the early twentieth century, which describes the “movement of blacks from southern farms to northern factories” (181). Dickerson shows how representatives of the African Methodist Episcopal Church cultivated mutually beneficial partnerships with northern factory owners. According to Dickerson, migrants who suddenly found themselves in larger cities with numerous religious options made decisions about which church to attend based on the economic opportunities these associations would offer them. Dickerson also discussed various other consequences that arose from the Great Migration, such as the
development of gospel blues music and the “rise of black women preachers” (201). In so doing, Dickerson offers a fascinating window into the development of African American religious life in the twentieth century.

Mark Hutchinson’s essay transcends the general scope of the collection. Hutchinson draws a contrast between the influence of American evangelicalism on global Christianity and the influence of global Christianity on American evangelicalism. In this essay, Hutchinson traces the latter turning point and advocates for its continued adoption. This global turn, suggests Hutchinson, can keep American evangelicals less entrenched in their cultural commonplaces and more attuned to the movements of the church not visible to those who are too deeply committed to regional custom. Hutchinson’s vibrant prose assists him in imparting the exigency of his topic to the reader and helps to place the notion of “turning points” in a broader context.

The subsequent essay shifts from broad concerns to a narrow moment in history as Grant Wacker considers the turning point of Billy Graham’s 1949 Los Angeles revival. Wacker argues that this revival provided a model to Graham over the ensuing decades. The essay features a brief but engaging retelling of the events surrounding the revival. A good deal of Wacker’s discussion centers on what appear to be, for lack of a better term, Graham’s marketing strategies. Wacker supplements his account of the revival with interesting snippets of media coverage that reveal the momentousness of the event not only for Graham’s ministry but for American evangelicalism at large.

The final essay in this collection, written by Darren Dochuk, takes up the turning point of the International Congress on World Evangelism, which took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. Dochuk analyzes this event with particular interest in its consequences for evangelical missions in Latin America. Taking a political approach, Dochuk reflects on the influence of Samuel Escobar and René Padilla in joining charismatic approaches to traditional evangelical ones in order to remake American evangelicalism in Latin America.

Carter and Rominger Porter’s collection is both broad enough to appeal to non-experts and substantial enough to be useful to students and scholars in the field of church history. The readings of the various historical moments addressed here offer clear and easily followed argumentative threads. While the essays collected here infrequently overlap thematically, the clear focus on turning points makes the book feel unified. While many of the essays look to the past, the authors do well to show the reader not only the significance of these events in their time, but their significance for the future of American evangelicalism as well. As one turning point feeds the others that follow it, the essays in this collection will help readers sense the lay of the land, so to speak, and be attentive to the next shift in church history which may appear shortly, just over the next rise.

Reviewed by C. Clark Triplett

Stanley Hauerwas is perhaps one of the most preeminent theologians in America today. He is a prolific writer and speaker, particularly on the topics of ethic and ecclesiology and his influence is far-reaching and discussed by theologians, philosophers, literary theorists, and social scientists across America and Europe. Although he teaches ethics at Duke University and at the University of Aberdeen, he has published essays and articles on a wide variety of topics including systematic theology, politics, ethics, law, and education. There have been a number of book-length works and dissertations on particular aspects of his work. This book by Nicholas Healey is the first to consider Hauerwas’s work as a whole.

Nicholas Healy is a professor of theology and religion studies at St. John's University in Jamaica, New York. Healey is the author of *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology,* which is included in the Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine series. The primary purpose in this text is to “push the criticism [of Hauerwas] much further and more extensively, not in a particular area so much, nor with a particular project of my own in view, but rather to get a handle on the work as a whole and assess it as such” (2). The author attempts to make it clear that this is not a “very critical” critique of Hauerwas as a person. Therefore, he seems to take extra care to make the reader aware that he is quite respectful of his body of work and admires his writing as a whole. Healey’s approach in this work is to analyze the written texts of Hauerwas from the perspective of a systematic theologian. He recognizes that Hauerwas has primarily discussed theology from a social-ethical perspective and is not a systematic theologian by training. However, he does indicate throughout this work that Hauerwas has a decidedly theological agenda that has systematic-theological implications.

Healey finds it necessary, before proceeding with his argument, to make a distinction between a theological agenda and the argument constructed to make a case for a rationale for a particular theological agenda. These two constructed together make up the “Theologians Project,” according to Healey. Healey makes it clear that it is not the theological agenda he is most troubled with, which he is in general agreement with, but it is the method and rationale for this agenda that he finds problems with.

Healey also makes a distinction between a general agenda and a particular agenda in theological projects. He generally agrees with Hauerwas’s general agenda that we need to make changes within the church that shifts away from abstract or universal approaches to ethics by means of broader categories such as “love” or “responsibility” towards an ethic with a focus on particularity with a concern to form Christians or Christian character within the community of believers (6). In other words, he wants to emphasize the transformative nature of
the embodied Christian life rather than a “system of beliefs.” Healy rather contests Hauerwas’s tendency to exclude other perspectives on the life of the church and he does so without the “safeguard” of traditional theological underpinnings such as the nature of God and his grace, of God’s redeeming activity in the church, and the place of Holy Scripture as a guide for the church. Theological substance seems to be puzzlingly absent in Hauerwas’s writings even though he has an obvious theological agenda.

Although Healey recognizes that Hauerwas is not a systematic theologian, he does believe that there is a “theological web or system” that holds together his writing projects. Hauerwas’s central theological focus, according to Healy, is his account of the life of the church. However, Healy believes that this account is so pervasive that it lacks an appropriate systematic balance that underestimates the church in the context of other theological loci such as the place of God and his redeemptive purposes within the church. Hauerwas focuses on the “situatedness” of the church in the world as a living and active community rather than ecclesiology as an abstract doctrine (21). The theology of the church is always embedded in the cultural habits of the community of the church. There is a “theological convictions issue in action that provides evidence of who we are as a Christian person” (22). For this reason, Christians cannot simply engage in abstract arguments because theology can never stand apart from life of the church.

Interestingly, Healy argues that Hauerwas’s methodology is more like the theology of Fredrich Schleiermacher than anyone else. This is a particularly surprising conclusion because Hauerwas writes so consistently and stridently against modern liberalism in theology. Schleiermacher is the quintessential liberal theologian in terms of his “accommodation” of theology in an effort to fit with the academic standards of rational inquiry. He does this, according to Healy, by a “turn to the subject in contemporary epistemology” (45). This implies that the focus of theology is always within the realm of the individual’s faith experience, making the religious experience the center of theology—a “feeling of absolute dependence.” It also removes theology from the firing line of critical inquiry. This feeling provides a “universal possibility, but can only be understood from within a religious community. The church’s primary function, then, is to form the self-conscious” (46). While Schleiermacher and Hauerwas differ radically on some things, they are related in some ways, particularly in terms of their understanding of the church. Although Hauerwas rejects the idea of a theology of the subject, he simply replaces the subject with the practice of the church body. Both emphasize that doctrine and theology are understood in the context of the life of the congregation either through personal experience or embodied in the practice of the church. According to Healy, this places Hauerwas squarely within the domain of modern liberalism.

Although Healy’s primary emphasis is on the Hauerwas destruction of the traditional doctrine and the lack of divine agency in the work of the church, he also believes that Hauerwas ecclesiocentric view places unrealistic burdens on the members of the church body. Not only does Hauerwas expect the church to manifest “visibly good Christians,” but also “to be identifiable as such by the world” (74). Healy argues that such a view is difficult to relate to the way the
church has displayed itself down through history because it is made up of a mixed group of people, including saints, disciples, and many unsatisfactory Christians who are “hanging-on” but who still consider themselves Christians. While, according to Healy, there is nothing wrong with exhorting members of the church to be better Christians, but is there evidence that the church has accomplished the role Hauerwas wants to portray? Healy believes that empirical diversity of the church simply does not coincide with the Hauerwas ideal. Ethnographic studies of particular congregations seem to show that congregations are quite messy with both strengths and weaknesses. Most members are somewhere along the way at varying levels of formation and development: “The elephant in the room is the active state of the church, which is only infrequently able to measure up to the requirement that the church cannot help but stand in sharp contrast to the world” (97).

This is a very important contribution to studies of systematic theology and will challenge many readers to critically examine the large body of work of an extremely popular and greatly admired Christian scholar. It is well argued and does not seek to undermine Hauerwas as a person or to simply dismiss his agenda for the church. For traditional theologians, Healey’s careful treatment will bring satisfactory rewards and is a welcome addition for the disciple of systematic theology. However, those who are avid readers of Hauerwas may find Healey’s treatment both misguided and unfair, particularly since Hauerwas agenda has been consistently ethical. His call for radical change in the life of the church strongly resists any efforts to position it within any traditional theological viewpoint. This is, perhaps, why his work speaks so profoundly to a postmodern culture that is suspicious of grand intellectual schemes.

Regardless of one’s disciplinary loyalties, this work is well worth the time of a close critical read. It hopefully will stimulate a number of future rigorous discussions. Healy is certainly correct in saying that if Hauerwas wishes to be taken seriously by evangelicals, he needs to find a way to relate his theological ethics to larger theological corpus. At the same time, since even Healey finds agreement with Hauerwas’s general ethical vision of the body of Christ, it would be worthwhile to find a way to discover a formula that more clearly relates systematic theology to the active life and confession of the church.

Reviewed by Julie Ooms

Charles Taylor’s tome *A Secular Age* is an intimidating volume that makes an increasingly pertinent and significant argument for twenty-first century Christians who seek to understand their age. This is, in effect, the argument of James K. A. Smith’s *How (Not) to Be Secular*, a book as brief as Taylor’s is lengthy, which Smith introduces in his preface as “both an homage and a portal to Charles Taylor’s monumental *A Secular Age*,” a “commentary on a book that provides a commentary on postmodern culture” (ix). On the whole, the book succeeds in providing an overview of *A Secular Age* that is at once thorough and succinct, and it is a valuable introduction to Taylor’s work for academics, pastors and theologians, college students in the latter years of their studies, and other strong readers interested in Taylor’s ideas. Despite its many strengths, however, *How (Not) to Be Secular* is not as accessible a volume as it aims to be, a weakness that does not diminish its argument’s strength but does shorten its potential reach.

The book’s chapters are written to run parallel with Taylor’s, so that the reader could choose to read Smith’s book alongside Taylor’s for clarification and some application. After a brief preface, Smith opens with an introduction entitled “Our Cross-Pressured Present: Inhabiting a Secular Age.” In keeping with Taylor’s idea that a convert is far more likely to be drawn into belief by a compelling story than convinced reasonably through a set of logical precepts, the introduction begins not with a list of terminology but with examples and descriptions of what it is like to inhabit the secular age Taylor argues we live within. The ideas in *A Secular Age*, Smith argues, chart “terrain mapped by the likes of Camus and Death Cab for Cutie more than staid social scientists and philosophers”; there is something, he says, “fundamentally literary, even poetic, in Taylor’s account of our ‘secular age’” (3). The introduction uses the novelists Julian Barnes and David Foster Wallace to draw the reader into the arc of Taylor’s story—these two writers are both unbelievers who are nonetheless “spooked”—full of “expressions of doubt and longing, faith and questioning” (14) that characterize the secular age. From these two examples, Smith frames Taylor’s picture of secularization with key terms and ideas. One Smith calls “doubting transcendence” (10), or the idea that “believers…are ‘fragilized,’” (10, Smith’s emphasis): i.e., our secular age makes believing in any kind of transcendent, spiritual reality difficult, such that believers are troubled by doubts: “faith is fraught; confession is haunted by the inescapable sense of its contestability” (4). Another idea, in contrast and balance with this doubting transcendence, is a kind of haunted immanence (3), or the idea that unbelievers are not necessarily devoutly so, but that they are haunted by the idea that the spiritual realities they deny do not exist—in other words, they don’t believe, but wish they could, or wish there was something to believe in. Believers and unbelievers alike, then, face moments (often lengthy ones) of doubt.
With these two ideas, and his examples, Smith gives readers an outline of what Taylor argues are the conditions of living in a secular age. He then closes the introduction with two things helpful for moving forward in both his own book and Taylor’s. One is a clear explanation of “Taylor’s threefold taxonomy of ‘secular,’” or the three ways in which Taylor (and thus Smith) define and employ the term “secular” (20). The first, secular\(_1\), is that of the medieval and classical worlds, where “secular” means simply “not connected to the church” (20-21). The second, secular\(_2\), refers to a far more recent (post-Enlightenment) idea of a space that can be “purified of the contingency, particularity, and irrationality of religious belief and instead be governed by universal rationality”—the idea that “secular” defines a society that has made religion irrelevant after the adoption of scientific precepts and reason (21). The third, secular\(_3\), is a term particular to Taylor; according to this notion, “a society is secular\(_3\) insofar as religious belief or belief in God is understood to be one option among others, and thus contestable (and contested)” (21-22).\(^1\) This set of terms fleshes out the background of Taylor’s central question, which the rest of Smith’s book will go on to chart. “Taylor’s driving concern,” Smith writes, “is to help us understand how we got here”—that is, how belief in God and transcendent reality moved from being a given to being one option among many (24). The five chapters of Smith’s book explore, critique, clarify, and comment on Taylor’s efforts to address this driving concern.

Chapter one, entitled “Reforming Belief: The Secular as Modern Accomplishment,” gives an overview of what Taylor highlights as the “three features of [the] medieval imaginary that functioned as obstacles to unbelief” (27) and goes on to lay out how Taylor accounts for the shifts in the secular age that removed those obstacles and made unbelief a possibility. In other words, chapter one explores Taylor’s argument for “how we got permission to stop believing in God” (47). Chapter two, entitled “The Religious Path to Exclusive Humanism: From Deism to Atheism,” unpacks Taylor’s ideas about what, after unbelief became a possibility, “emerged to replace […] belief” (47). The chief replacement is exclusive humanism, and one example of this humanism’s effects is the move from a past where “the doctrine of providence assured a benign ultimate plan for the cosmos” to a present where “providence is primarily about ordering this world for mutual benefit, particularly economic benefit” (49). With the rise of exclusive humanism, Smith notes that Taylor sees a parallel rise of an “excarnational” Christianity—a Christianity that becomes increasingly only spiritual as the modern imaginary becomes increasingly humanistic and only immanent (58). Chapter three, “The Malaise of Immanence: The ‘Feel’ of a Secular Age,” and chapter four, “Contesting the Secularization Thesis,” discuss, respectively, the kind of “haunting” that those living in a secular age are prone to experience, and the idea that this very haunting makes less feasible the “Secularization Thesis,” or the idea that secularization simply means that religion has been shed from human society after science and reason proved it incorrect and unnecessary.
These four chapters lead Smith to his fifth and by far longest chapter, which shares its title with the book: “How (Not) to Live in a Secular Age,” and to his brief conclusion. This final chapter, which runs parallel to part 5 of Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, discusses Taylor’s attempts to undercut “the confidence of the secularist ‘take’ on the world” (that is, the idea that “secular” is “secularist”) by “showing it to be a take, a construal, a reading. In sum, the final part of *A Secular Age* is an attempt to get secularists to own up to inhabiting a secular age” (92). Smith lays out not just Taylor’s takedown of secularism, but also the ways in which Taylor believes Christianity has responded ineffectively to (and often allowed itself to be co-opted by) the influence of secularism; two of these are a “Platonized” Christianity, which is purely spiritual and divorced from the body (113-14), and the troubled “Modern Christian Consciousness” to which the idea that faith demands sacrifice—often bloody, painful sacrifice—seems to undercut the idea of a good and loving God (114-15). Grim as these ideas might seem, Smith concludes the book somewhat hopefully: with the idea that the haunted nature of the secular age might make the “strange rituals of Christian worship” more, not less, appealing to those living within it.

As I noted above, *How (Not) to Be Secular* is a thorough and succinct introduction to Taylor’s significant and significantly intimidating *A Secular Age*. It breaks down Taylor’s ideas into a brief and largely palatable format, and its clarity is helped along considerably by a glossary, important terms in bold, well-chosen footnotes, and the occasional pull quote or simplified commentary in a sidebar on some pages (for a good example, see page 39, where a thought-provoking question about how Protestants can respond to Taylor’s critique of the Reformation sits in a sidebar alongside Smith’s discussion of Taylor’s views of the Reformers). These pull quotes and sidebars are especially helpful, as they can clarify and ground Taylor’s often difficult ideas in boots-on-the-ground questions for readers whose interests are more practical and pastoral than they are academic and philosophical.

However, this book does have its pitfalls, the main one being that its reader is assumed to be exceptionally well-read, though she or he might not have yet read *A Secular Age*, at least. Allusions to and discussions of Flaubert, David Foster Wallace, Karl Barth, Kierkegaard, and Death Cab for Cutie might occur on the same page, if not in the same sentence, and keeping pace can be difficult even for a widely read audience. One gets the sense that Smith’s allusions and references come out of enthusiasm for his subject and effort to show the scope of application for Taylor’s ideas, and not from arrogance; despite that, this book is less accessible than others of Smith’s books, such as *You Are What You Love*. Thus, though the book bills itself in its preface as a widely applicable volume that appeals to a broad audience—from the church planter to the “atheist…or at least agnostic” (viii)—the applicability of its ideas is greater than its most helpfully engaged audience may be.

That said, *How (Not) to Be Secular* is still a thoughtful and relevant introduction to Taylor’s ideas, and as one largely persuaded by Taylor’s ideas myself, I find it a useful book for my own academic study and writing, for sharing with colleagues, and even for discussing with the junior and senior English majors.
I teach. To bring Taylor’s critique of secularization to an audience less steeped in theology and the liberal arts, we may require an additional text.

Note

1 Along with these three terms and definitions, Smith also includes a glossary at the back of the book, which lists this terms and others sprinkled liberally throughout the book. All of these terms (such as “fragilized,” “buffered self,” and “excarnation”) are bolded when used in the text. As a result, readers less familiar with Taylor or his framework—or who need to refresh their memories as to the definitions of key ideas—can easily consult the glossary.

Reviewed by Julie Ooms

Any scholar even slightly familiar with the project of feminist literary criticism will know that a large part of that project is recovery—that is, the recovery of texts written by women, texts that were lost, ignored, or denied entry into the canon because of the sex of their authors. Marion Ann Taylor and Heather E. Weir’s book *Women in the Story of Jesus* assumes a role in this project, recovering, collecting, and ordering the writings of thirty-one nineteenth-century women, all of whom interpreted the Gospels. Taylor and Weir do not just recover, however; their book is also engaged in the study of reception history—that is, the study of how particular texts were received by readers in a given time period. Thus, Taylor and Weir’s book recovers the writings of nineteenth-century women whose work reflects how the Gospels were received and interpreted during that historical period. And in their thorough, well-organized volume, Taylor and Weir provide a broad sampling of interpretive voices that would be a strong aid to the twenty-first century reader, whether that reader is studying nineteenth-century women’s writing, reception history, or even seeking to better contextualize their own understanding of scripture. Furthermore, Taylor and Weir’s volume highlights the need for scholars and lay believers alike to recover—and listen to—the voices of women in the ongoing conversation about biblical interpretation and application.

Because this book is an anthology of largely unfamiliar writings, its introduction must do considerable work in contextualizing and framing the excerpts that make up the bulk of the volume. Taylor and Weir’s introduction does this work well. Four sections give readers different aspects of these excerpts’ context. The first discusses the study of the gospels in the nineteenth century more broadly, stating that “over the course of the century, questions about the reliability of the gospel accounts and about traditional approaches to such issues as the similarities and differences between the gospel accounts became part of public and not simply scholarly discourse” (4). This diverse discourse included alternative theories about the origins of the gospel accounts, their chronology, and questions of whether the events within them were historically accurate, in addition to textual criticism (5-6). For example, it was in the nineteenth century (in 1860) that *Life of Jesus* was translated into English and made available to British and American readers—and it was translated by a British woman, Mary Ann Evans, or George Eliot (5). Taylor and Weir argue that while women were (with a few exceptions) “neither historical critics nor text critics, their writings on gospel women show that many women were aware of the current debates about how to read and interpret the gospels” (6-7).
The second section of the introduction provides helpful context about roles and expectations for nineteenth-century men and women. These roles and expectations, and the degree to which women aligned themselves with them, informed their writing about the gospels. “Women were generally held to be more spiritual and emotional than men [...] [and were] thus by nature closer to God than men,” write Taylor and Weir (7); indeed, many thought “the gospels would be enhanced if a female point of view were available” due to this viewpoint, as well as to the fact that “women, particularly mothers, were held up as ideals of love and self-sacrifice in the nineteenth century” (9). Thus, it is important to remember that “gendered ideals and ideas about women were used to empower women as well as to silence them” (9). In other words, the roles and expectations nineteenth-century British and American women were expected to fulfill often became the very ground from which their writing about scripture sprang, and even what justified their writing. However, as the third section of the introduction explains, women were still largely excluded from the academic study of scripture and theology (10), thus also barring them from training in particular kinds of biblical interpretation. Without access to these tools, “a number of women identified a [...] particularly ‘womanly’ way of reading Scripture” based on the “binary opposition [of] a male intellectual and a female heart approach” (11). This kind of approach is rooted in the views of women discussed immediately above, as well as the limitations placed on women that barred them from the theological academy, but it also allowed women to criticize the “male intellectual and rational critical approach” (11). Some of the women in the volume use this “female heart approach,” while others, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, “blended the interpretive approaches associated with men and women” in ways that enabled them to take to task the gender bias of biblical interpreters more generally as well as advance social causes for women (12).

The fourth section of the introduction acts as a jumping-off point into the meat of the anthology, and outlines the three themes the editors found in their analysis: “Christian piety or spirituality, women’s public preaching and teaching in the church, and women as interpreters of the biblical texts” (14). These themes provide the broad categories Taylor and Weir use to divide the book. Each of these categories is then subdivided into sections that focus on different women in the gospels. For example, the section on women’s spirituality includes women’s writings on Mary, Jesus’ mother, and on Mary and Martha of Bethany; the section on women preaching includes writings on Anna, the Samaritan woman at the well, and Salome; and excerpts in the section on women’s interpretation focus on the Canaanite woman, the woman caught in adultery, and Mary Magdalene. The women writers whose work fills this book are sometimes familiar—in addition to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Cady Stanton also make appearances—and sometimes more obscure. Their writing spans a number of genres, including “commentary, scripture biography, essays, travel diaries, children’s lessons, and sermons” (15). This variety further illustrates how many nineteenth century women navigated, worked within, and pushed against the gender roles and expectations they lived under: they wrote as scholars and
teachers in the “male genre” of commentary, and they wrote as mothers, those entrusted with the spiritual education of their children.

The fourth section of the introduction also solidifies Taylor and Weir’s purpose in this volume: “By making these excerpts by women on women in the gospels available […] we hope to encourage the integration of women’s writings into teaching and preaching on the gospels, and invite further analysis of these and similar works” (13). Though they have, in my view, compiled a book that is well suited to help achieve that purpose, the book does have some weaknesses worth noting. The first is that it is limited in terms of the women writers represented here: all of the authors are either American or British, though most are British, and most of them were part of the Church of England, so denominational and international diversity is slightly wanting here. Second, and by design, the writings in this book are limited in terms of the scope of their subjects. As the book’s title states, the excerpts all focus not only on the gospels, but on women in the gospels. This topic is hardly an unworthy one, and indeed the book’s existence suggests that a book with a similar focus had not been published before. However, readers will have to look elsewhere to find nineteenth century women’s writing on other parts of scripture and on other topics in the gospels themselves.

These limitations aside, however, this volume is a welcome one, useful for pastors, academics, and teachers alike. The book is well suited for the last especially: each section begins with introductory material and closes with reading questions that would be particularly helpful to college students, perhaps using this book as part of a course on the gospels or in a course on the reception history of the Bible. Overall, this book contributes a title to the growing list of works (for example, Lynn H. Cohick and Amy Brown Hughes’s 2017 volume Christian Women in the Patristic World) that expand and deepen our understanding of women’s contributions to the formation of the church, the development of its knowledge of scripture, and the application of its teachings in the wider world.

Reviewed by John J. Han

This is a collection of four classic Tolstoy stories, including the widely anthologized *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* and “Master and Man.” Originally translated into English for publication by Oxford University Press, the Signet Classic softback edition came out in 1960. In 2003, Hugh McLean’s Afterword was added, and in 2012, Regina Marler’s new Introduction was included. In her introduction, Marler—a San Francisco-based writer for the *New York Times Book Review* and the *Los Angeles Times*—briefly traces the reception of Tolstoy, his fiction, and his ideas. Tolstoy’s admirers included Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, and Virginia Woolf, as well as communist revolutionaries Lenin and Trotsky. Excommunicated from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901, Tolstoy officially remains a false teacher in Russia, but there is no denying that his fiction deals with important moral, ethical issues still relevant today. Although his stories sometimes smack of male chauvinism, they also portray reality with masterful vividness and profound psychological insight.

The first story, *Family Happiness* (1859), concerns domestic happiness—or the changing perception of domestic happiness—as experienced by a young woman and her middle-aged husband, initially her father figure. After undergoing fairy tale-like courtship, they marry despite their lingering doubts about the sustainability of their union. After a couple of months’ happy life with her husband, the teenage bride suffers from boredom that comes with a comfortable, respectable aristocratic lifestyle. She feels that she is missing out on something exciting in life. She also feels slighted by her older husband, who wants to protect her from all worldly concerns. As time passes, the couple’s love for one another remains unchanged, yet their relationship is characterized by cold affection, not by passionate, idealistic love they once had for one another. Their noble, Christian desire to help others vanishes because of their mutual infatuation, then later because of their strained relationship. Feeling lonely, she has little time for other people, and her husband buries himself in his work.

In the story, Tolstoy expertly builds the quiet tension that rises out of the changing spousal relationship, but the ending sounds anticlimactic. The young wife suddenly learns from her middle-aged husband that couples move from one kind of love to another kind and that such a transition should be accepted by both parties. After having a moment of enlightenment, she accepts the fact that their son, who symbolizes the fruit of their earlier love, takes the place of their once passionate love. Similar to the ending of the Ivan Ilych story, the main character experiences a moment of spiritual awakening, but the ending seems somewhat contrived. The story offers a highly insightful look into the psyche of people who create an idealistic roadmap for life and find out that there is little room for other
people. Although the story was written in the 1850s, decades before Tolstoy’s conversion to a radical moralism, the story already reveals the author’s preoccupation with self-sacrificing love, a theme that pervades Tolstoy’s fiction, including *The Death of Ivan Ilych* and “Master and Man.”

The second story in the collection is *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), which chronicles the death and dying of a forty-five-year-old government employee in St. Petersburg. (Some English translations spell the title character’s last name *Ilyich*.) The beginning of the story tells us that he has died of a seemingly trivial home accident. It is interesting to observe the initial reactions of his colleagues to the news of his passing. They are glad that it is Ivan Ilych, not they, who died, wondering how his death will lead to their own career advancements. Then, they are slightly annoyed by the inconvenience of having to attend his funeral. However, he has died, and their lives will move on with some minor interruptions. On her part, Ivan Ilych’s wife wonders how much government pension she will inherit through his death, trying to maximize the amount. The only family member who seems to mourn his passing is his young son.

Having established the fact that Ivan Ilych’s death is not truly mourned by either his colleagues or his wife, Tolstoy takes us back to Ivan Ilych’s early life, his law education, his marriage, his work life, his career ambitions, his struggles with illness, the sense of emptiness he feels on his deathbed, and his coming to terms with the finality of life on earth. Ivan Ilych married his wife because she, though slightly inferior to him in social class, would make his life respectable. The couple’s relationship deteriorates once she becomes pregnant, which imbalances her hormones. The wife begins to complain, and the husband begins to spend most of his time at work or playing card games with his colleagues. One day, while decorating a curtain at home, he falls from a stepladder, which leaves pain in his side. No doctor can diagnose the problem accurately, and he eventually dies from it. He feels deserted by his wife and their grownup daughter, who blurts out to her mother, “Is it our fault? It’s as if we were to blame! I am sorry for Papa, but why should we be tortured?” (151). During his final days, Ivan Ilych is cared for by a peasant named Gerasim, a man of simple faith who comforts him by saying that everyone will die at some point and that a dying person needs support. On his deathbed, he feels that his life has been wasted, but he embraces death when it approaches him as light.

The third story, *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), reads more like a treatise than fiction—similar to Plato’s philosophical works of dialogue. The entire story is set on a train in Russia. Narration is sparse, and most of the lines are dialogue in which characters express their views on the nature of marriage, the ideal relationship between man and wife, and the efficacy of the institution of marriage. The most dominant and peculiar character in the story is a man who passionately believes that marriage is the union of two souls, not something based on physical attraction. He finds sexual intimacy detestable, short-lived, and disillusioning. *The Kreutzer Sonata* is about spousal jealousy that results in the husband’s stabbing murder of his wife and his lifelong remorse over it. A garrulous man, he insists on telling his life story to the nominal narrator of the story. According to
him, he loved his musician wife, but she spent much time with another man who shared her love of music. Suspecting adultery, he stabbed his innocent wife, who died cursing him. Other than recording what he heard from the stranger, the narrator does not offer any moral judgment, and the reader is left to hear the stranger’s story and put together what might have transpired between the couple.

What unmistakably emerges in the story is the complex nature of marriage. The story shows that a long-lasting, unchanging spousal relationship is not always guaranteed, which seems to reflect Tolstoy’s negative view of the institution of marriage. Compared with the two previous stories, *The Kreutzer Sonata* is much more balanced in the author’s treatment of marriage. By allowing the husband to speak from his perspective but not giving the wife an opportunity to tell her side of the story, the author makes it possible to wonder what she might say in her defense. What is clear is that the husband’s remorse-filled story suggests that she was most likely misunderstood and killed by him. Also, in Tolstoy’s world, marriage is an extremely difficult thing for both husband and wife to sustain; there are so many stumbling blocks on the road together. People marry because they are by nature selfish, succumb to societal pressure to marry, or seek respectability. The narrator of the story comments that nine out of ten marriages are unhappy. It may sound hyperbolic, but as a realist, Tolstoy vividly portrays the ways in which a marriage can become a nightmare.

The final piece in the collection is titled “Master and Man” (1895). In this short story of greed and redemption, we are introduced to a church elder, Vasili Andreevich Brekhunov, who is rich yet desires more wealth. Readers will find it easy to predict that his greed will ruin his life. Similar to Pakhom, the main character of Tolstoy’s didactic story “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” Vasili Andreevich is ruined by his greed, but, unlike Pakhom, he achieves redemption by sacrificing himself so that his servant, Nikita, can survive a deadly snowstorm. The main character’s obsession with material happiness is vividly portrayed in the story. Having an eye on a grove for sale, Vasili Andreevich is determined to purchase it before a competitor buys it. Along with his servant, he begins his journey, but a big snowstorm confronts them. The two men have opportunities to stay in safety over night, but Vasili Andreevich insists on reaching the destination ahead of his competition. Despite his wishful thinking, he and Nikita get lost and stranded in freezing temperatures in the middle of wilderness. One time, he alone escapes with their horse, leaving behind his sleeping servant. Yet his escape fails, forcing him to shamefully return to his servant. The two men try to survive by sharing their body heat. As Vasili Andreevich’s body feels numb, he begins to lose consciousness, but he dies knowing that Nikita will probably survive through the body heat from him. The servant survives, living twenty more years. The story is largely allegorical, yet the portrayal of the two men’s suffering in a nightly snowstorm and the master’s decision to die for his man are portrayed in a highly realistic manner. Initially, some readers may assume that the peasant, a man of simple faith, will somehow die for his selfish master. He could have done that, but in the snowstorm, he gets so tired that he falls asleep. The master, who selfishly decided to abandon his servant, is forced to return to him, feeling guilty and ends up dying for him.
In all four stories, Tolstoy realistically portrays the everyday problems people face—in their family lives, in their struggles for survival, in their desire for better things in life. Something positive comes out of the ordeals in *Family Happiness, The Death of Ivan Ilych*, and “Master and Man,” but *The Kreutzer Sonata* comes to a bleak end. The stories are page turners with deep insights into human psychology, and the author’s respect for disenfranchised people who live by faith is abundantly clear. In the sense that Tolstoy’s characters end up learning something from their life experiences, his stories are redemptive. At the same time, the horror of life is not sugarcoated in his stories; for a realist like Tolstoy, there is little room for embellishing the human condition. It has to be mentioned that Tolstoy’s stories are fundamentally men’s stories—their sufferings, their pain, and their spiritual awakenings; women appear as neurotic cases, as nuisances, or as virtually nameless figures living quietly in a man’s world. What is remarkable in his stories are the author’s admiration for the simple, faithful lifestyle of peasants, his keen observation of the vagaries of human life, and his compassion for those who become victimized by their own passion and greed.

Reviewed by John J. Han

Set in mid-nineteenth century St. Petersburg, Russia, *The Insulted and the Injured* is Dostoevsky’s second full-length novel (the first one being *The Village of Stepanchikovo*, 1859) newly translated for Eerdmans by Boris Jakim. In typical Dostoevsky fashion, the mood of the story is somber, dreary, and melancholy. The novel begins with the narrator’s portrayal of a grim scene in which a decrepit old man—Jeremiah Smith—dies on the street minutes after his equally decrepit old dog dies inside a confectioner’s shop. After this depressing scene, the novel moves on to the narrator’s early life. The narrator, Vanya, tells us that he is a fiction writer who—like the main character of Dostoyevsky’s novella *Notes from Underground* (1864)—was as an orphan in the countryside. He was adopted by the home of Nikolai Sergeich Ikhmenev, a gentle landowner who owns fifty serfs, and grew up in a comfortable environment. Vanya was very close to the landowner’s daughter, Natasha, a beautiful and golden-hearted woman three years his junior, and the two grow up like brother and sister. By the time Vanya leaves for St. Petersburg for a university education, he secretly harbors deep affection for Natasha.

Dostoyevsky then presents Prince Valkovsky, the shrewd, scheming absentee landlord from St. Petersburg who owns an estate with 900 serfs; his land stands next to Nikolai Sergeich’s. Despite the shady rumors about Prince Valkovsky’s character, Nikolai Sergeich agrees to serve as his estate manager. A few years later, Prince Valkovsky sends Nikolai Sergeich a letter expressing his desire to send his wayward son, Alyosha (Prince Alexey), to him so that Alyosha can learn good manners under his mentorship. Nikolai Sergeich willingly agrees, and Alyosha joins the family. By the end of chapter ten, some ingredients of plot conflict emerge: Nikolai Sergeich is a kind man with a beautiful daughter in a marriageable age, Vanya loves her, she will likely draw the attention of the handsome but dimwitted Alyosha, Prince Valkovsky spreads slanderous rumors against Nikolai Sergeich (an alleged embezzlement) and Natasha (an alleged seduction of Alyosha), the unfounded rumors disrupt the relationship between Prince Valkovsky and Nikolai Sergeich until the latter loses all of his possessions in a legal battle, and Nikolai Sergeich and his family move to St. Petersburg penniless. Readers also get the feeling that Jeremiah Smith and the mysterious girl who begs on the street will have some bearing on the plot. The rest of the story weaves an epic tale of insults and humiliations among some of the main characters. (Other English translations of the novel have different titles, such as *Humiliated and Insulted, The Insulted and Humiliated, and Injury and Insult.*)

In St. Petersburg, Vanya—a promising writer—visits Natasha’s house and resumes his friendship with the family. Vanya and Natasha develop romantic feelings for each other, and she furtively agrees to marry him. With the publication of a highly acclaimed first novel (autobiographically, it resembles
Dostoevsky’s 1846 novella, *Poor Folk*), Vanya gains respect from Nikolai Sergeich. However, Nikolai Sergeich, who adores his daughter, tells Vanya that he and Natasha should wait at least one year to see if the young man is financially secure enough to marry her. The story then moves fast forward as Vanya reappears at Natasha’s house. By this time, Vanya is a sickly young man whose literary career has stalled, and his disheveled appearance convinces Nikolai Sergeich that it was wise not to have allowed Natasha to marry Vanya in haste.

Thereafter, the story becomes complicated as Alyosha—Prince Valkovsky’s son—manages to seduce Natasha and run away with her. Alyosha truly loves her but tends to have wandering eyes. Although Natasha knows that (and she still loves Vanya), she follows Alyosha so that her union with him can somehow help Prince Valkovsky stop harassing her father with endless lawsuits. Despite Vanya’s pleas not to leave her parents, Natasha says that her course of action is the only option left for her. In the meantime, Prince Valkovsky—one of the most evil characters in Dostoevsky’s fiction—has found for his son a young beautiful woman in high society named Katya; not surprisingly, Alyosha is attracted to her as well. Upon Natasha’s departure, Nikolai Sergeich curses and disowns her, but he and his wife, Anna Andreevna, grieve over her every day.

*The Insulted and the Injured* reflects Dostoevsky thematic preoccupation: suffering as part of human life and as a way to redemption. Main characters, such as Vanya, Natasha, and her parents, undergo various trials in life. The setting of St. Petersburg serves as a metaphor for human suffering; it is “a dark, gloomy city with its crushing, stupefying atmosphere; with its pestilential air; with its expensive mansions, always begrimed with dirt; with its pale, dim sunlight and its evil, half-crazy inhabitants […]” (325). As in other Dostoevsky novels, there are few moments of happiness in life. When Vanya pleads with her that she return to her parents’ house, she says resignedly, “We’ll have to gain our future happiness by suffering; we’ll have to pay for it with some new torments. Everything is purified by suffering... Oh, Vanya, how much pain there is in life!” (79; ellipsis in original). Indeed, by the end of the first third of the novel, many characters suffer pain: Nicholai Sergeich and Anna Andreevna mourn the elopement of their daughter; Natasha sacrifices herself so that she can make Prince Valkovsky relent toward her father; she yields Alyosha to Katya for his happiness; Vanya is caught between his love for Natasha and her reasons for deserting him; and the passing of Jeremiah Smith and the appearance of Nellie—a thirteen-year-old orphaned granddaughter of Smith—are tinged with tragedy.

Despite the pervasiveness of suffering, the novel shows that life is worth living for those who remain virtuous and have patience. Dostoevsky makes it clear that it is sometimes hard to avoid painful partings, yet for good people, curses become blessings, despair yields to hope, and lost honor is restored. Although not an exhilarating experience, Dostoevsky’s fiction provides readers with something to think about—about life, about human nature, about love, and about Christian charity. *The Insulted and Injured* is a text for contemplation and reflection, not for entertainment. It is one for slow reading, although the gripping nature of the plot may make readers turn the pages quickly. Those who are new to Dostoevsky—a towering figure of world literature who influenced Franz
Kafka, Flannery O’Connor, and Orhan Pamuk, among many others—may find James P. Scanlan’s introduction and the translator’s preface helpful in understanding the critical reception of the novel, the ideological background to the story, the Dostoevskian theme of good and evil, and the place of *The Insulted and Injured* in the author’s oeuvre.
Poems

“The Life” and Other Poems

Jane Beal

The Life

I open my hands.
The butterfly lifts into the sky.
I have never seen
something so beautiful—
the life
that goes
toward heaven.

A White Chicken

There’s a big yellow house that borders
the greenbelt path through Willowcreek,
and those that live there keep chickens
in their backyard, which is why I, and the man
strolling with his baby, both thought
that maybe you, white chicken, had flown the coop,
conquered the fence, and found yourself
happily on the other side.

Here you were, pecking into the wet earth
and fallen leaves, looking for a fine feast of worms,
oblivious to us, the two watching you and wondering
if you needed to go home, if you would want
to return, if you knew anything about cats
and the dangers that accompany them,
and if you really belonged to our neighbor or
if you just happened to be here for some mysterious reason.

I don’t really think of white chickens as angels,
but Marc Chagall does: you were pure white
on a wet January morning, vivid against the dark earth
you traversed, like a sign, like a promise—
innocent, apparently lost, but maybe
not to yourself, maybe only to us, the two watching, not yet understanding what God was trying to tell us.

**Psalm 1**
*Beauty Is Everywhere*

Lord, beauty is everywhere in your kingdom:

in the light of the sun shining through morning mist

in the coolness of the morning before the summer heat comes on

in the leaves of the summer-trees, ever-green and oak

in the oak trunks and branches, in the hidden nests of squirrels and birds

in the birds that are hidden and the birds that sing out—

O Lord, beauty is everywhere in your kingdom.

**Psalm 2**
*I Want to Be a Psalmist*

Lord, I want to be a psalmist in your kingdom

to bring an offering of incense before your holy throne

and a sacrifice of praise into your angelic court—

to bring a heart of thanksgiving into the heavens where you live
and a spirit of humility
into the places where you dwell.

Here is the golden bowl
held between my hands!

Here are burning coals, the fire
of your servant’s longing!

Here is the bird of my soul,
sitting on my right shoulder—

she takes flight toward you, O Lord,
and finds safety in your Presence.

**Psalm 3**

*You Are Great*

O Lord, you are great,
and there is none like You!

Your Glory fills the whole universe
and every place on earth—

Your Glory fills my eyes
and the hidden places in my heart.

O Lord, you are great,
and there is none like You!

The African antelope
stands on the side of the road,

and her gentle eyes meet mine
as she stands still and waits on the Spirit

though she holds in her body
the power to dance across these grasslands.

O Lord, you are great,
and there is none like You.
Psalm 4

Now I See a Yellow-Billed Stork

Lord, I see an elephant with long tusks
alone on the savanna—

I see giraffes with long necks
striding together in the morning.

I see hippos in the Nile
and a kingfisher flying in midair—

I see a mother monkey
carry her baby on her back.

I see a water buffalo,
and he sees me!

I see a wild warthog
trotting away through the trees.

Now I see a yellow-billed stork
standing in the river-shallows.

O Lord, how marvelous is every creature
You have made!

Psalm 5

Sunday Birds

Lord, did you see us
flying down the freeway?

I was looking out the window
at the sandpipers skittering across the sand,

and the Great White Egrets
wading in the water,

at the seagulls intermixed with them,
and the pelicans—the surprising pelicans!—

bright-white with huge orange bills
floating in a flotilla together
and fishing the wetlands
where I would never expect them to be—

far from the Pacific Ocean,
far from the coast they love.

Lord, did you see us
flying down the freeway?

Because I saw your hand
in the Sunday birds all around me.
Symbols of Grace: Haiku

C. Clark Triplett

five loaves and fishes
countless mouths to feed
the numbers do not add up

stranger on the road
appearance of the ordinary
unexpected joy

empty cup
thirst left unquenched
wine in a new skin

angel-beast
simil justus et peccator
grace tips the scale

blood red sunset
fish frying on the shore
dreams of endless days

twelve hungry men
leaning toward the Word
last bread and wine

theologia crucis
a path of suffering
in a culture of plenty

crux dissimulata
finding sacred treasures
in dark places

kenotic presence
putting off glory
to join humankind

Easter horizon
an event that transforms
the boundaries of reality
Notes

1 The term is borrowed from Bruce Cockburn’s song “Burden of the Angel/Beast” in his *Dart to the Heart* album.

2 “at the same time saint and sinner” (Martin Luther).

3 “theology of the cross.”

4 “hidden cross.” During times of persecution, Christian symbols were hidden within other symbols. One common method was to hide the symbol of the cross within the symbol of an anchor.
Poet’s note:
Walkin’ Preacher of the Ozarks (New York: Harper & Row, 1944) is a memoir authored by Guy Howard (1891-1966). Born in Lucas County, Iowa, he became interested in the Ozarks while reading Harold Bell Wright’s The Shepherd of the Hills and The Recreation of Brian Kent. After the early death of his wife, Howard—along with his two sons—moved to the Missouri Ozark hills for teaching and mission work. The memoir chronicles the author’s response to God’s call to evangelize the Ozarkers, his life among mountain folk, and the fruits of his godly labor. The haiku sequence below captures some of the memorable scenes in Howard’s narrative.

1
the Angel of Death
sweeps through the prairies,
taking a young wife

2
open and read!
the Book falls open at
Matthew 19:29¹
trucker’s warning:
don’t go to the Ozarks!
lots of killin’ and feudin’!

walking 300 miles
to the hills of the Ozarks
for His work

an Ozark trail
singing birds, scurrying squirrels,
sweet purple blossoms

Ozark splendor
God made ever’ one of them hills,
all the purtyness

on reaching the site
where a slave market once stood,
he thanks God for freedom

learn to sleep
on a crackling bed,
a corn shuck mattress

peeking at pupils’ lunch pails:
cornbread, fried young squirrels,
fried frog legs

a well-known secret:
make others happy,
you’ll be happy

a good Christian:
the master of one’s fate,
one’s brother’s keeper
moonshinin’, drinkin’, fightin’—
the scourge behind
Ozark beauty

dance night on a hill
much drinking followed
by brawling

loud dance party
stopped by a fervent prayer
resounding amen!

abandoned school building
sweeping and mopping the floor
for church services

church in the dell
a clear blue stream sings
nature’s doxology

Sunday school
it’s shore a heap better’n dancin’
all night Saturday

Sunday service
singing soul-stirring hymns
of forefathers

river baptism
sorrowful woman’s heart
now light as a feather

indebted to Christ
the preacher accepts neither
pay nor offering
This poem is based on the final two paragraphs of Chapter 4, which read,

At last, out of my confusion I again cried to God for help. I picked up the Bible and prayed, “Oh, Word of God, give me the answer.” The Book fell open at the nineteenth chapter of Matthew and my eyes fell on verse 29. Surprised, and a little disconcerted, I read, “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

That settled it, and with a deep sense of peace and comfort I accepted the decision. Aloud I said, “I’m ready. I’ll start for the Ozark Mountains next week and God will guide me where He wants me to go.”

This scene recalls the moment when St. Augustine (354-430) heard a child from a nearby house chant, “Pick up and read, pick up and read!” (Latin: *tolle, lege, tolle, lege*). As Augustine opened the Scriptures, his eyes fell on Romans 13:13 which contained the message he needed to hear: “[L]et us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy.” For more information on Augustine’s conversion experience, see his *Confessions*, Book 8.
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Call for Papers and Book Reviews

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*A Faith and Learning Journal*

*Published Semiannually by the*
*Faith & Learning Committee and the*
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*Missouri Baptist University*
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*Intégrité* (pronounced *IN tay gri tay*) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal on the integration of Christian faith and higher learning. Founded in the fall of 2002 with the Institutional Renewal Grant from the Rhodes Consultation on the Future of the Church-Related College, it is published both online and in print copy. Interested Christian scholars are encouraged to submit academic articles and book reviews for consideration. Manuscripts should be sent as e-mail attachments (Microsoft Word format) to the editor, John J. Han, at john.han@mobap.edu.

Articles must be 15-25 pages, and book reviews must be 4-8 pages, both double-spaced. Articles should examine historical, theological, philosophical, cultural, and/or pedagogical issues related to faith-learning integration. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

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