

# CARSON-NEWMAN



# *Studies*

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# CARSON-NEWMAN *Studies*

VOL. XV, No. 1

FALL 2014

ISSN 1081-7727

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*Carson-Newman Studies* is published annually by the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Carson-Newman University, Jefferson City, Tennessee. Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, P.O. Box 71976, Carson-Newman University, Jefferson City, TN 37760.

Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editors or of Carson-Newman University. Statements of fact are the responsibility of the individual contributors.

CARSON-NEWMAN  
UNIVERSITY

## Editor's Introduction

Quality scholarship and Christian service continue this year to be the “Twin Pillars” that undergird the mission and vision of Carson-Newman University. For two years now we have held the “Twin Pillars” award banquet in April, highlighting our commitment to the best in scholarship and in serving God through serving others. The essays in this volume bear witness to that quality work.

The better the scholarship, the better the service. We are committed to the rigors of academia because these rigors have proven for at least two thousand years to be a most reliable means of uncovering key truths about the world. And the better we know what is true of the world, the more effectively can we serve our Lord in its midst. I often tell my students that one of the reasons we must think hard in order to find some truth is because we are trying to get somewhere, and learning about the universe is like trying to make a map. We never have a perfect map, of course, but the better our map, the more likely we are to make progress toward our destination.

Since our destination is nothing short of building toward the reign of God in our little corner of the cosmos, we should care to give our very best thought to mapping the terrain. We are trying to align our own truest selves with what is most true about the world—that is, we are trying to discern God’s will for us in the world. So we must seek our callings and know something about the road we will pursue in living it out.

So the more we know about history (local, regional, global), scripture, our inner selves, our own faith traditions and those of others, the better equipped we will be to live out our own unique callings in building that kingdom of love and light, peace and grace.

I remain grateful to God that Carson-Newman University continues to inspire and to equip in this noble mission.

--Brian Austin



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## Sites of Resistance: History, Memory and Community

Dr. Beth Vanlandingham

[Distinguished Faculty Address August 2013]

I may be the only person on the Carson Newman campus who actually opens every email that our beloved and unflappable Jimmy Hodges sends out—but here’s why—in between all those dire warnings about how I might be flattened by a falling tree branch, struck by lightning, slip on an icy sidewalk, be pummeled by hail or be carried off by a tornado, he sends a jewel like this story.

During the closing days of WWII an American bombing mission was launched over Kassel, Germany. Elmer Bendiner was a navigator on the B-17 bomber Tondelayo. Nazi anti-aircraft guns hit the bomber with flak and 20 mm shells pierced the fuel tank. By some seeming miracle, the plane did not explode into flames; instead, the plane and its crew made it back to the base. Later, Bendiner was marveling over his miraculous survival when the pilot, Bohn Fawkes, told him it wasn’t quite that simple. Here is the story in Bendiner’s words as reported in a veteran’s newsletter:

On the morning following the raid, Bohn had gone down to ask our crew chief for that shell as a souvenir of unbelievable luck. The crew chief told Bohn that not just one shell but 11 had been found in the gas tanks... 11 unexploded shells where only one was sufficient to blast us out of the sky. It was as if the sea had been parted for us. Even after 35 years, so awesome an event leaves me shaken, especially after I heard the rest of the story from Bohn. “He was told that the shells had been sent to the armorers to be defused. The armorers told him that Intelligence had picked them up. They could not say why at the time, but Bohn eventually sought out the answer. “Apparently when the armorers opened each of those shells, they found no explosive charge. They were as clean as a whistle and just as harmless. Empty? Not all of them! One contained a carefully rolled piece of paper. On it was a scrawl in Czech. The Intelligence people scoured our base for a man who could read Czech. Eventually they found one to decipher

the note. It set us marveling. Translated, the note read: “This is all we can do for you now.”<sup>1</sup>

“*This is all we can do for you now.*” Those are haunting and challenging words written by someone forced to work in a Nazi slave labor camp making munitions. We have no idea if this person or this group of workers—after all, the note said WE—survived or died in the maelstrom of that war and in the grotesque conditions of those camps. What we do know is that the survival of that plane and its crew was not exactly a miracle or even just a piece of luck—it was the result of a decision and a courageous action taken by a man, or perhaps a woman, or more likely a group of prisoners who had been forced by a brutal war machine into a hellish world where they had no rights and very little capacity to make choices. And yet, in the midst of seeming powerlessness, he, she, they, did something risky and dangerous. Such an act of sabotage if discovered would surely have resulted in death—and probably a cruel and tortuous death at that. And perhaps it did. But those words scrawled on that piece of paper are a compelling reminder of the power of agency. Why bother to act when the powers that grip you are so seemingly overwhelming? But these men or women were trying, in the memorable phrase that has long been a part of the African American community in this country, to make a way out of no way.

When Nelson Mandela was a prisoner on Robben Island serving what would turn out to be a 29 year sentence for resisting South Africa’s system of apartheid he was often in solitary confinement or at hard labor. Yet he managed to maintain his dignity in the face of a system that daily tried to crush it. In the early days of his imprisonment, when the guards came for him they yelled at him, pushed him, poked him with their guns and tried to rush him along at their pace in order to bully and intimidate him. He had almost nothing to fight back with but he created an act of resistance out of what he had at hand—his dignity. He walked with measured steps, refusing to be rushed, forcing the guards to walk at his pace.<sup>2</sup> He was making a way out of no way.

The poet and essayist Alice Walker discovered acts of resistance in the long-forgotten gardens and quilts of black women who

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<sup>1</sup> This story was sent to me via email by Jimmy Hodges in February 2013. The original source is unclear but it was taken from an Air Force Village monthly newsletter.

<sup>2</sup> Nelson Mandela recounts this incident and many other acts of resistance in *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Boston: Little Brown, 1994.

were forced by discrimination and racism into poverty in the post-civil war rural South. What Walker found when she went in search of her mother's garden in rural Mississippi was that black women in the rural South created acts of resistance to the often ugly realities of the Jim Crow world where they lived by creating beauty in whatever ways they could. They took scraps of fabric and made colorful quilts and took simple seeds and made flowers bloom.<sup>3</sup> These were simple acts of resistance but these women, too, were making a way out of no way.

During the Dirty War in Argentina in the 1970's and early 80's when tens of thousands of ordinary people were imprisoned and murdered by the military government for speaking out about the reign of terror going on in that country, the mothers of the disappeared staged protests in the Plaza de Mayo right in front of the Presidential Palace. They put diapers on their heads to remind the men in that government that they had birthed and nurtured these children who the government was destroying. They held up pictures of their missing children, and day after day demanded that the government stop killing and torturing their children.<sup>4</sup> They were risking their own lives; they were trying to make a way out of no way.

History is full of stories like these—stories of people who, finding themselves caught in systems that try to disempower them and beat them down, still manage to create sites of resistance. This is one of the most compelling threads that runs throughout modern history—the ingenuity and capacity for resistance to systems of power that try to denigrate or even destroy individuals or groups. These are complex and powerful systems of economic injustice, racism, intolerance, or just simple meanness. Sometimes the acts of resistance are large, dramatic, and grab our attention but sometimes they are small and almost imperceptible. I was reminded of this when I was reading the autobiography John Hope Franklin, one of the most important and influential black historians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He grew up in the era of Jim Crow segregation laws but attended Fisk University in Nashville and went on to earn a PhD from Harvard. During a question and answer session after one of his public lectures when he was in his 70's, a white woman in the audience asked him, “How did you accept living under those Jim Crow laws for so long?” His answer was direct—“As far as

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<sup>3</sup> Alice Walker, in *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. San Diego: HBJ, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>Marguerite Guzman Bouvard details this remarkable act of resistance in *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Press, 1994

my family was concerned, we did not accept these laws—we resisted them every single day.”<sup>5</sup> That is a different way to view history. Resistance takes many forms.

When Michele Norris, NPR journalist and writer, was exploring her own family history she discovered some surprising family stories that no one had ever talked about. Her mother’s mother, it turned out, had worked during the 1930’s as a traveling Aunt Jemima, donning a hoopskirt and head scarf to do pancake demonstrations for farm women in the Midwest. It was the depression. Jobs were scarce. The work paid better than being a domestic and allowed her to gain some economic independence and to travel—so she took it. Now you have to remember that the whole point of this, as far as the makers of Aunt Jemima pancake mix were concerned, was to evoke images of the slave woman of the “Old South” whipping up some tasty pancakes for white folks. Her grandmother was supposed to be impersonating a slave woman. In her recent autobiography *The Grace of Silence—The Power of Words*, Norris explained how her grandmother practiced the art of everyday resistance even in this setting. She steadfastly refused to speak in the slave patois that supposedly went along with the costume. Instead, she used her job to present an image of educated black womanhood that her small town audiences may have never seen.<sup>6</sup> She was making a way out of no way.

As communities, we need to remember and tell these stories of resistance so that we constantly remind ourselves of the possibilities for creative resistance that are all around us when we live in a world of injustice, meanness, and trouble. Making a way out of no way is a powerful image that Martin Luther King Jr embedded in one of his most famous addresses. When he spoke to the southern Christian leadership Conference on August 16, 1967 here is what he said:

When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to *make a way out of no way* and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let

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<sup>5</sup> John Hope Franklin, *Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> This powerful story forms the centerpiece of Norris’ book *The Grace of Silence—The Power of Words*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2010.

us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice.<sup>7</sup>

When we think about the stories that are preserved as our history and that are handed down the generations within our communities we have to ask ourselves—which stories deserve to be told? Which stories do we need to remember, celebrate, or mourn over? Which stories do we need to take special care to preserve in order to remind ourselves that often it is through acts of resistance or through sheer resilience in the face of injustice, unfairness, intolerance, or meanness that people help bend that moral arc of the universe in the direction of greater justice and goodness? It doesn't bend on its own. If it bends in the direction of justice or greater goodness or more beauty or kindness it is because people help to bend it. And those people don't always live long ago, far away or somewhere else—they are right here among us.

There are sites of resistance all around us. Sometimes we are aware of them and sometimes we are not. Sometimes we are aware of them but choose not to talk about them. I would like to contemplate with you for a few minutes the power of looking for and talking about sites of resistance or stories of resistance and resilience that are nearby—in our own communities. When we realize that there are sites of resistance all around us and we start talking about them, we are reminded that any of us can bend that moral arc towards greater justice, goodness, fairness, kindness, and respect.

We can begin right where we are in this somewhat mundane campus dining room. Perhaps it seems like an unlikely site of resistance but during the Netherton years this room became the stage for a small but important ritual of resistance. Even saying those words, “the Netherton years” makes some of you flinch because those seven years were years in which many faculty members as well as staff felt harassed, demeaned and discounted by those in positions of power. Those of you who were here during that era know that during that time the Distinguished Faculty Address, given in this room, was often a ritual of resistance. I invite you to peruse the titles of these addresses that are on your tables and give some thought to what you see there.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., Address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, August 16, 1967 (emphasis added).

<sup>8</sup> Charles Moffat, *A History of Academic Freedom* (1999); Patsy Boyce, *The Science and Art of Teaching As Viewed By the Dissection of a Teacher* (2000); Jim Coppock, *Excellence Does Not Happen By*

These were the addresses that were delivered between 1999 through 2007 —years during which the college struggled for direction and its very survival. It is no secret that those were tough times but how do we talk about them and understand them?

During those years the message coming down to faculty from the Netherton administration was very different from what it is today—and it was very clear—the message was shut up, don't complain, don't challenge our decisions, don't ask questions, don't ask us to let you know what is going on, don't talk to trustees, don't hold unauthorized meetings. There was a generalized gag order in effect and faculty members who did these things were sometimes, “invited to retire,” demoted, threatened with unspecified reprisals, or, often, just yelled at. There was a growing sense among many in our community over the course of those years that the college was heading towards financial disaster and physical decay. Enrollments were declining and we were not sure we would survive. Strategic planning was frowned upon and deemed “a constraint.” Staff members were given impossible tasks without resources and then berated for not accomplishing them. It was in this atmosphere that those distinguished faculty addresses were given as faculty members from many different disciplines stepped forward to speak publicly and courageously about their concerns and about the values that they believed we needed to hold on to as Carson Newman College. Sometimes the message was direct—sometimes oblique—but it was there. This is a part of our story as a community that needs to be remembered and honored.

There were other acts of resistance—some pretty flamboyant and reminiscent of something out of the theater of the absurd. Here is one example from among many. Several years into Dr. Netherton's term as president Professor Joe Bill Sloan came into the History and Political Science building and announced, only half-jokingly, “*I believe Ken Morton has gone insane.*” I looked up and said, “Really—what has he done now?” Apparently, on the previous Saturday, when a group of trustees was scheduled to be on campus, Professor Ken Morton went out to the stadium to try to put himself in the path of the

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*Accident* (2001); Sharon Teets, *Who Moved My Cheese?* (2002); Eric Thorson, *Singing Choral Music Expressively* (2003); Mark Heinrich, *How Are the People Around You Doing?* (2004); Thomas Milligan, *Observations About the Future of Carson-Newman College* (2005); Phyllis Driver, *Standard Setting and Ethics in the Accounting Profession* (2006); Ernest Lee, *Seeking Sacred Space* (2007).

Board of Trustees and intercept them as they got off the bus on their way to breakfast. Wearing his mortar board, with a gag in his mouth, and his empty pockets hanging out in a sort of bizarre salute he looked like an Old Testament prophet. He was trying to send the trustees a visual distress signal. Was Ken crazy? Or had our system become crazy? In the midst of our crisis as a college was a dramatic symbolic act the only thing that made sense? And more to our point today, where does a story like that fit into the history of a community? Is this a story to tell or bury?

My purpose here is not to try to catalogue the history of those years. I don't know the whole story of those years but eventually it will emerge. Dr. Baumgarder is working on the official college history, Jim Coppock is gathering his papers, and many of you have stories and documents to share. One day we will be able to look at those years from all angles and come to an assessment of them. But I would suggest to you that it matters what we choose to remember and record when we think about our histories as communities. I deeply appreciated Dr. Mallard's retrospective report of the last five years of our history as a community. Her catalogue of accomplishments suggests an amazing turnaround. It hasn't been easy for anyone—but it has been good for the College—now University—and we need to celebrate that. But we should also remember that the Netherton era did not end by a miracle or by chance—it ended because of the courageous action of members of this faculty. Dr. Netherton resigned after a vote of no confidence organized by faculty members who took considerable professional risk in bringing that about. Members of the religion faculty had a special burden to bear in that process but faculty members from almost every department were part of that story. Their actions opened the door to a new era of leadership for the college. What a different spirit we live with since Dr. O'Brien took up the leadership of the college. Where would we be today if not for the action by faculty that brought that about that change? Could you have imagined the laughter and goodwill that was so apparent at yesterday's faculty workshop? So are both parts of this story worth telling—both the struggle and the accomplishment? I think so. As my friends in AAHA are always saying when we come to a difficult subject, the truth is the truth—why not just say it?

This work of remembering is important to *our* sense of our community among ourselves but it is important to any community. Carson Newman University does not live just within its own campus boundaries—we live in the larger community of East Tennessee where there are other stories of resistance and resilience that we should celebrate, preserve, and try to understand. Over the past few years,

through my work with the African American Heritage Alliance (or AAHA! as we like to call it) I have come to understand that all around us are sites of resistance, places and stories that testify to the resilience of African Americans in communities all across East Tennessee. But that story is often untold and is in danger of being forgotten. One of these sites of resistance is less than a mile from where we sit. It sits on top of the hill overlooking Jefferson City.

Let's go there for a moment. Follow Russell Avenue toward downtown, walk past the post office and cross the railroad tracks; keep going past Blanc and West Lumber and struggle up the hill. It is steep. You will pass Martha Davis Baptist Church and Boyd's Chapel United Methodist Church (both very old black churches). Finally, you arrive at a modest park. What do you see there? A rather ordinary brick building that looks like a gym; a small children's playground; a ball field; a concession stand. A small sign says "Nelson Merry Park." Who is this Nelson Merry you wonder? You look around and there is nothing to tell you. There is nothing to suggest that during the era of segregation there was a vibrant black school here that was the centerpiece of a strong community that had a passion for educating its children. That school was called Nelson Merry School and it was an extraordinary part of the history of Jefferson County and this region and this college.

In the years after the Civil War, about 5000 former slaves found themselves living as free people in Jefferson County. At that time Jefferson County encompassed much of what is today Hamblen County and so you have to imagine these Freedmen spread over what is today both Jefferson and Hamblen counties. Although many people tend to think there were no slaves or very few slaves in East Tennessee slavery was here and it was part of the pre-Civil War fabric of Jefferson County. A prominent Jefferson County man in White Pine was one of the most prosperous slave traders in the region. He regularly bought and sold human beings not very far from where we are sitting. Elihu Embree, an early abolitionist, lived for a while in Jefferson County before moving up the road to Jonesborough where in 1820 he began publishing the *Emancipator*, the first abolitionist newspaper in the United States.<sup>9</sup> Men associated with Carson College were slave

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Larry Osborne, Professor of Psychology, has been working to document this remarkable story of Quaker activism in our region. Among the resources he has found that help fill in our knowledge of this story are "The First Manumission Society," *The Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (December, 1911), pp. 184-187; Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27785337>. On Quaker

owners. There was a slave market in Morristown--complete with an auction block. After the war that building was turned into a Freedmen's school. The man who was the first black teacher at that school, Andrew Fulton, had been sold as child with his mother for \$1400 on that very auction block.

So slavery was part of the pre-Civil War fabric of this area whether we like to think about it or not. This straightforward fact means that after the Civil War there were freed slaves who were faced with the need to figure out how to begin that transition to freedom and to try to claim the promise of equality which is supposed to be at the heart of our American ideals. How did those families make that transition? This is one of the stories that AAHA is working to uncover and preserve. It is the theme of our upcoming conference in October. On your tables there are information cards about that conference and we invite you to attend and get involved. We are asking a difficult question—what happened to black families in East Tennessee in the 50 years after Emancipation? What were their challenges? What were their triumphs?<sup>10</sup>

We don't know all of the story but we do know that at the center of this story is the story of the resilience of black families and black community organizations that emerged during those difficult years after the war. All over East Tennessee the Freedmen got busy building with their own hands and resources churches, schools, farms, community organizations, neighborhoods and businesses. Sometimes they were helped by sympathetic white people—but often not. And in the midst of increasing discrimination in the 1880's and 1890's the black families in the area of Mossy Creek made a commitment to build a school that would be a site of resistance against the system of segregation that was clamping down around them as the century came to an end. By the 1890's there was almost no public funding for schools for black children--so this community knew if they wanted a school for their children they would have to build it themselves.

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roots: <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/QUAKER-ROOTS/2003-08/1061511426>. A summary of Elihu Embree's papers can be seen at <http://elihusantislaverypapers.blogspot.com/>.

<sup>10</sup> AAHA!'s conference was held at Tusculum College in Greeneville, Tennessee on October 4-5, 2013 to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Greeneville is the site of the Andrew Johnson National Historic Site which was a partner in this conference. The conference theme was *Echoes of Emancipation: One Region, Many Stories*.

Under the leadership of Pastor Peter Guin, a black Baptist preacher serving Martha Davis Baptist Church, they held a fundraising campaign and bought 12 acres of land on top of that hill overlooking Jefferson City and then they launched their school. They built the first building from lumber milled on site using labor from the community; the second building came five years later when the growth of the school required a new building. This time, they seemed to want to make a statement about both pride and resilience within the very structure of their building. *We are here to stay*—so they built a fine brick building. The black brick masons who built that building were members of the Coleman and Dockery families.<sup>11</sup> They made all the bricks for the buildings on site in carefully constructed kilns. When they laid those bricks they built a building they hoped would indicate the strength and determination of their community.<sup>12</sup>

They named their school after Nelson Merry, the most prominent black Baptist preacher in Tennessee in the 1870's and 1880's. Nelson Merry had no direct ties to the school but he represented something important to the people who built that school on the top of the hill because he had been a slave before the war and had been, with the permission of his master, a preacher; after the war he became the pastor of a 5000 member black Baptist church in Nashville. He had a passion for education and his own life story was proof of what a Freedman could accomplish if he worked hard and had high aspirations.

That story of Nelson Merry, and the story of the school in Jefferson City that was named for him, is a story that is worth telling. Mr. Eugene Peck outlines much of it in his fine book *The Legacy of Nelson Merry*. The story that he tells is a story of people making a way out what seems like no way. Over the years of its existence from 1890-1965 Nelson Merry School was the center of a vibrant black community in this area and, along with the black churches in the area, a site of resistance to the injustices created by segregation. It flourished *in spite of segregation and in the face of segregation* because of the

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<sup>11</sup> Alverrene Bridgeforth has been working to document the history of black brick masons and their families in East Tennessee. This project, which we tend to call, The Brick Road, is an ongoing project of AAHA!

<sup>12</sup> These handmade bricks were the basis for several early buildings on Carson Newman's campus—all of which are now gone. The story of Nelson Merry School was gathered and privately printed by Eugene E. Peck. *The Legacy of Nelson Merry: A Pictorial History, 1890-1965*. 2001. Carson Newman University has a copy in its archives.

commitment of the community around it. Many students who graduated from Nelson Merry went on to college and into professions where, years later, they would begin challenging the system of segregation that had tried to narrow their world. Students from the community around that school were among the first African American students to attend Carson Newman. So even though the beautiful old buildings built by the hands of black brick masons, including the one built in the 1930's as a Rosenwald School, are gone, the story of that school is worth preserving and telling because it reminds us, once again, that bending that moral arc of the universe towards justice can happen anywhere and at any time.

I would like to close by lifting up the work that these women in AAHA! are doing to preserve the stories of resilience, resistance, and goodness that are all around us in this region. These women belong to that great generation of women who worked for Civil Rights, sat in at segregated lunch counters, helped establish Head Start programs, initiated legal aid services for domestic violence victims, integrated workplaces like Magnavox, and helped establish a presence for Black history in local archives. They are part of a generation which knows that change is possible and that it comes through persistent resistance to the systems of injustice that we find around us—whatever those might be. Their own lives are a testament to that fact and now these same women, Clara Osborne, B.J. Blevins, Roverta Russaw and Alverenne Bridgeforth are working to preserve black cemeteries, black churches, black school buildings, and African American archival materials, and the stories of the African American brick mason families who have contributed so much to our region. Members of AAHA! are working to preserve and restore Westview Cemetery here in Jefferson City, New Salem Church in Sevierville, the history of Morristown College and Swift Memorial College in Rogersville, the Tanner School in Newport, and many more. These buildings and these stories are indeed close to home for all of us. They remind us of segregation but also resistance to injustice when we are invited to consider the entire story.

The work of preserving stories reminds us that we help bend that moral arc of the universe when we help build systems of justice, fairness, and equality and offer resistance to systems that demean and disrespect people. Sometimes the stakes are measured in terms of life and death; other times they are less dramatic but no less important. Retelling these stories become sites of resistance in and of themselves. Remembering and telling those stories is vital to our sense of our larger community because these stories shape our understanding of what is possible. Our collective memories of who we are and where we have been shape the possibilities we have for who we can become. So which

stories should we take care to preserve, pass on, and celebrate? When we tell the stories of resistance and resilience that are right here among us we are reminded that there are always opportunities to move our society or community towards justice and goodness. It matters what stories we tell and it matters how we tell them. History does not repeat itself in its particulars but one thing we do know is that there will always be a “next time” when someone will need to act in either a small way or perhaps a large way to change the course of history by offering an act of resistance or practicing resilience and courage in the face of power. Often, we find ourselves hoping that someone else will do this. As we think about that, we would do well to hang on to the words of the great African American poet June Jordan who reminds us that we can look around for someone else to do the hard work of justice but it is very likely that “We are the ones we have been waiting for.”<sup>13</sup>

Poem for South African Women by June Jordan

Our own shadows disappear as the feet of thousands  
by the tens of thousands pound the fallow land  
into new dust that  
rising like a marvelous pollen will be  
fertile  
even as the first woman whispering  
imagination to the trees around her  
made  
for righteous fruit  
from such deliberate defense of life  
as no other still  
will claim inferior to any other safety  
in the world

The whispers too they  
intimate to the inmost ear of every spirit  
now aroused they  
carousing in ferocious affirmation

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<sup>13</sup> June Jordan, *Poem for South African Women*. Written in Commemoration of the 40,000 women and children who, August 9, 1956, presented themselves in bodily protest against the "dompass" in the capital of apartheid. Presented at The United Nations, August 9, 1978. In *Directed by Desire: Collected Poems by June Jordan*. Copper Canyon Press, 2007.

of all peaceable and loving amplitude  
sound a certainly unbounded heat  
from a baptismal smoke where yes  
there will be fire

And the babies cease alarm as mothers  
raising arms  
and heart high as the stars so far unseen  
nevertheless hurl into the universe  
a moving force  
irreversible as light years  
traveling to the open  
eye

And who will join this standing up  
and the ones who stood without sweet company  
will sing and sing  
back into the mountains and  
if necessary  
even under the sea  
we are the ones we have been waiting for



## Presidential Convocation Address, August 2013

J. Randall O'Brien

In today's technological world knowledge doubles every eighteen months. Workers must be prepared to hold as many as eleven different jobs in a lifetime. Many likely coveted jobs ten years from now do not even exist today. As David Kearns, the late CEO of Xerox noted, "The only education that prepares us for change is a liberal education."

I must confess I never took a course in college teaching me how to be a college president, or, for that matter, how to manage any other job I have held. However, my liberal arts education included studies in English, history, mathematics, psychology, science, religion, Greek, music, art, German, theology, health and physical education, communication, economics, and literature. This well-rounded, broad-based education continues to serve me quite well. Your professors offer similar testimonies. The education we have received, and are offering you here at Carson-Newman, is typically known as a liberal arts education. (Technically, we are a liberal arts-based university, since we proudly offer professional courses of study, where technical training, clinical service, and internships accompany study in the liberal arts.)

The word, liberal, comes from a Latin root, *liber*, meaning, "free." The word refers to a free person. Interestingly, the word, *liber*, also means, "book." Apparently, the thought is we are liberated, or set free, by our study of books. And from what might we be freed? Ignorance, bias, linguistic, geographic, and cultural myopia, racial, ethnic, and gender prejudice, dullness, boredom and being boring, fuzzy thinking, naiveté, an inability to think critically, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and present effectively, ethical apathy, arts and sciences vacuity, and a lack of imagination.

For these reasons and more we may choose to refer to the liberal arts as "the liberating arts and sciences." Why? Because the education you will receive at Carson-Newman will set you free, free to reach your full potential as educated citizens and worldwide servant-leaders, free to learn, live, and lead well. Carson-Newman graduates testify to this truth-claim daily as they live, serve, and thrive literally all over the world. You, too, will soon join this impressive cloud of witnesses extolling the virtue of a Carson-Newman education.

As we embark upon our academic journey together in this exciting new school year, may I lament five myths, which together, we might, hopefully, vanquish?

**Myth #1: You go to college to be trained for a job.**

According to one survey, 84.7% of college students say this is why they chose to go to college. May I suggest the purpose of a college education is not to be trained for “a” job, but for “any” job? The ideal is to enter college to learn, to grow, to develop keen habits of the mind, to become mature, educated citizens, and servant-leaders. In the library, under trees, in classrooms and residence halls, we read books, discuss them, learn, play, and sing music, paint, design, conduct experiments in science labs, freely question, think, write, and critique ideas, engage in dialogue and civil debate, listen hard and well, research, give public presentations, perform, develop our talents, exercise, grow spiritually, play intramurals, make friends, encourage one another, receive the blessings of professors, serve the needy in the community and around the world, and gain self-respect, as well as the respect of others, as we do our best to become the best whole person we are capable of becoming.

Fifty-five percent (55%) of hiring decision-makers say they want employees with a broad-based education.

**Myth #2: Education is preparation for living.**

No, education *IS* living! Our education begins as we exit the womb, perhaps earlier. Certainly we have been learning since birth, learning to explore, to ask questions, to doubt, to trust, to believe, to look, listen, touch, smell, taste, discover. Education is “24/7, 365,” spanning from “womb-to-tomb.” College is simply a privileged environment giving us the time and freedom to focus intensely on learning while growing intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Education helps shape us into the person we are becoming. Who are you becoming?

No, despite the myth, life doesn’t begin when you leave college. This *IS* your life. Education isn’t preparation for living; education is living. Hopefully, we will all be lifelong learners. But if we must think in terms of education as preparation, then know sixty percent (60%) of liberal arts graduates say they feel prepared for life after college, whereas only thirty-four percent (34%) of public flagship university graduates say they feel ready for what follows college. Seventy-six percent (76%) of liberal arts graduates say they were prepared for their first job, a ten percent (10%) higher number than graduates from major state universities. Education is living, and a liberating arts and sciences education is “mighty fine living.”

**Myth #3: You go to college so you can make more money.**

Eighty percent (80%) of college students say their top personal objective is “being well-off financially.” Now, let’s be honest: who would turn down more money? College graduates do, in fact, earn much more income over the course of a lifetime than non-college graduates (one survey claimed a fifty percent (50%) increase; another noted an eighty-four percent (84%) gulf; still another cited a seventy one percent (71%) difference.) But is making money really what life is all about? I’m encouraged that seventy percent (70%) of college students say that “helping others in difficulty” is important. Here at Carson-Newman, seventy-five percent (75%) of you volunteer in the community weekly, making Carson-Newman one of the top universities in America for general community service!

Jesus taught, “You can’t worship both God and mammon.” Think about that? Jesus’s words name mammon as a rival god to the One True God. Let us beware. May I submit that our true purpose in life is to serve God by serving others? Regardless of our vocational choice, our calling as Christian scholars, first, is to be discipled (from the Latin, *discipulus*, “to learn”), i.e., to learn, then to love God and others by serving them. “For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, New International Version)

Would you like to “find yourself?” that is, discover your purpose for living? Serve others.

**Myth #4: Education should not change you.**

Perhaps you have heard these words: “Don’t let education change you.” Pardon me, but is that not an oxymoron? How can we learn and not change? How can we learn and not become smarter, wiser, and better equipped for the living of our lives? Is this well-intended, but ill-conceived counsel saying, “Now, you go on up there to that college for four years, but don’t you learn anything?” Of course, you will change! To learn is to change. We are all changing every day, learning, growing, becoming educated Christian citizens.

What is our Carson-Newman mission? *“Our mission is to help our students reach their full potential as educated citizens and worldwide servant-leaders by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community.”*

So, please, do let education change you.

**Myth #5: A Christian liberal arts education is sub-intellectual.**

Once I was invited to be a guest on a live radio talk show. My host asked a provocative question: “Do you agree,” he inquired, “that Christian education is sub-intellectual?” Well, of course, I did not agree with such an absurd claim. “There are many fine educational options in higher education in America today,” I began. “In any of our outstanding public universities, scholars may view their field of study through the lens of their choosing. They may take a feminist perspective, a Marxist, LGBT, or African-American approach to their subject. A native-American, socialist, or Machiavellian focus is permissible, as well,” I added. “The one lens through which they may not view their discipline, however, is the Christian lens. Whereas, in Christian higher education, we are free to examine a field of study through any, or all, of those lenses, too. But when all is said and done, we can add a Christian lens for a stimulating, provocative discussion. Therefore, “no,” I concluded, “I would not agree that a Christian education is sub-intellectual. I would argue it is supra-intellectual.” His response? “Touche’!”

Here, in this place on this hallowed ground, we are called to the life of the mind, to accept our Lord’s invitation to love Him with all our hearts, souls, and minds. Let us, then, accept the radical challenge to “think Christianly.” Let us dare to integrate faith and learning, as well as interrogate faith and learning. But let us not stop there. Let us intertwine faith and living. For just as we not only see the sun, but see by it, let us not merely see Christ, but see by Him. Let us dare to think Christianly, and debate respectfully, issues on the agenda of our world: abortion, gay rights, war, poverty, wealth, capital punishment, the environment, hunger, nuclear weapons, immigration, guns, sex, and anything else!

Let us enjoy living, learning, serving, and glorifying God. Let us understand that chapel is not more glorifying to God than the classroom, nor the classroom more than the fields of play, or the cafeteria, or the residence halls. God calls us to give ourselves to Him in every area of life in every place every moment. The cosmos is God’s campus; the universe is God’s university; the sky is His sanctuary. If we are under it, we are in God’s House. Every moment of our lives is an offering we bring to the Lord.

God has a wonderful plan for each of us in this room. Let us not get hung up on the plan part and miss the wonder part. Wonderful really does mean, “full of wonder.” That’s our world: wonderful! This brief life is an adventure. Drink it in. These college years are God’s gift

to you. Laugh, work, play, question, marvel, read, think, wonder, listen, give, worship, grow, serve, pray, befriend, converse, dream.

So here you sit in your opening convocation for the start of a new academic year, not in a secular state school, nor a vocational-technical school, but in a liberating arts and sciences Christian university. You had your choice. You chose wisely. I predict one day, Robert Frost's famous words will be yours, as well:

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood,  
And I---I took the one less traveled by  
And that has made all the difference.*

Welcome to Carson-Newman.



“The Treasure Hunt”  
Matthew 13: 44-46

David Crutchley

[Baccalaureate Address Class of 2014]

Good morning. Thank you for the privilege and opportunity of sharing with you today graduates of 2014. Congratulations.

South Africa has eleven official languages. Tswana is one of them. There is a Tswana proverb that speaks of the “dawning of the dawn”—when only the tips of the horns of the cattle can be seen on the hill tops etched across the morning sun.<sup>14</sup> In a sense each one of you graduates elect stand at the “dawning of the dawn.”

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Charles IV was king of Spain and Napoleon Bonaparte strode across Europe like a colossus. Anticipating the French Emperor’s insatiable appetite for power and property and his covetous eye settling on Spain, Charles IV decided to hide his priceless collection of ancient clocks and crown jewels. He asked one of his trusted aides to tear out bricks in one of the walls in the 365 rooms in the palace and hide his clocks and to do the same in a different wall with Spain’s crown jewels. The shrewd steward obliged and cut a small piece of the drapery curtain in front of the two brick walls that had hid the booty in the event that Spanish monarchy was restored one day. The cut cloth would be the clue to where the treasure might be found. As Charles predicted, Napoleon conquered Spain and installed his brother Joseph as king over the territory. By 1814 Napoleon was struggling to survive and Ferdinand VII, son of Charles, was installed as monarch in Spain. Naturally the first matter at hand was to locate the crown jewels. But there was a slight problem. Joseph Bonaparte was an interior decorator and had redone the 365 palace rooms. The pieces of fabric and curtain saved years earlier were absolutely worthless. Ferdinand had a decision to make – would he tear down the walls of every room in the palace to find his clocks and crown jewels or cut his losses. He decided to leave the palace standing. Many thought this story was a legend and quaint myth until a few decades ago a plumber working on one of the walls found the priceless

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<sup>14</sup> Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005), 667.

clock collection. Perhaps one day another worker will tear away the bricks in a wall and find the missing crown jewels of Spain.

As a first year law student I remember well our Roman law text book, a tome of five hundred pages, written by H. F. Jolowicz. I remember reading with interest one section on treasure trove. In Roman law the Latin word for treasure is *thesaurus*. Under the Roman emperors, if a person stumbled on treasure on another person's land without a deliberate search, half of the trove went to the finder and the other half to the owner of the land.

Life is like a treasure hunt. As we journey through our lives we glean lessons and principles that are as rich as treasure. I share with you a few treasures this morning:

***Out of the ashes new life may be born –***

What will you do when you lose the plot of your life? When life hits you on the side of the head with a brick and reminds you that you are not the giant of your dreams. I have been introduced to a new genre of movies recently by my six year old daughter, Abigail Kylie. Last week we watched the animated movie about surfing penguins called "Surfs Up!" One of the main characters "Big Z" a "whizz" surfer falls off a wave early in the story and all the penguins think he has drowned in the massive wave. With pride hurt and failure large in his psyche he hides on the other side of the island until he returns back to the home place and the penguins ask him with mouths agog, "Where have you been?" He replies, "I got lost for a little while."

J. K. Rowling of *Harry Potter* fame spoke to the graduation class at Harvard in June 2008. At the age of 42 she looked back at where she was 21 years earlier as a university graduate and shared two of her life changing ideas: imagination and the benefits of failure. She said the dragon that she feared most as a graduate was not poverty but failure. Within seven years of graduating she had failed on an epic scale – a short lived marriage had imploded, she was jobless, a lone parent, and as poor as it is possible to be in modern Britain without being homeless. She shared with this ivy-league class, "Now I am not going to stand here and tell you that failure is fun. . . . [But] failure meant a stripping away of the inessential. I was set free because my greatest fear had already been realized, and I was still alive, and I still had a

daughter whom I adored, and I had an old typewriter and a big idea. So rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life.”<sup>15</sup> Failure in life is inevitable. It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously like a turtle or tortoise that refuses to nudge his head outside his shell to see the sun. If you live like that you might as well not have lived at all – in which case you fail by default. Resilience, tenacity and perseverance are the gold ore of life. In the crucible of adversity the steel of character may be melded and forged.

***Generosity of spirit helps to build a world with a better name—***

Remember you are created in the *imago dei* –from the dust of the earth and from the breath of God.

At times you will have to walk away from the safe place and spurn the seduction of the status quo. You will need to disentangle from the self and reach out to the other with humility. Tear down the walls that divide, don’t circle the wagons and wait out life but build bridges across new frontiers. As Desmond Tutu, the conscience of Africa, defines the African spirit of *ubuntu*– “I find meaning in you (and how I have found meaning teaching some of you graduates), and you find meaning in me. A solitary human being is a contradiction in terms.”<sup>16</sup> In a real sense we belong to the Creator God and we belong to each other. Jesus tasted the dust of the Palestinian soil and read the signposts of people’s lives. He stopped at the intersections of their lives and listened to their broken stories. There was a practical earthiness about his ministry. Offer to people you meet the gift of time and your humanity.

Remember, the Jesus Creed instructs us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as we love our own self. This creed does not give us permission to indulge in a pietistic, introspective faith. Mary Schmich also warned in her *Chicago Tribune*

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<sup>15</sup> J. K. Rowling, “The Text of J. K. Rowling’s speech: ‘The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination,’” *Harvard Gazette* (June 5, 2008). Online: <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2008/06/text-of-j-k-rowling-speech/>

<sup>16</sup> Desmond Tutu, *An African Prayer Book* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), xiv.

column in the 1990s “don’t be reckless with people’s hearts.”<sup>17</sup> Sear deep into your being the immortal words of Micah “This is what YHWH asks of you: only this to act justly to love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8: *The Jerusalem Bible*). These words are not religious rhetoric but imperatives to live out.

***The opportunity of hope nourishes our lives—***

We cannot live without hope. We are born into a world of hope. We are taught early in our lives to hope and press for success. Daunting circumstances or discouraging people, however, chafe our spirits.

Several years ago the Noble Prize committee in Oslo, Norway named biologist Sir John Gurdon as a co-recipient of the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine. In 1958 Gurdon had cloned a frog at Oxford University using intact nuclei from the somatic cells of a *Xenopus* tadpole (aren’t you Biology majors impressed that a Religion prof. knows something about Biology). As a high school student Gurdon had attended the elite public school of Eton College where he ranked last out of 250 boys in his year group in biology and was in the bottom group of boys in every other science. Gurdon has a framed school report in which his teacher wrote “I believe he has ideas about becoming a scientist; on the present showing that is quite ridiculous.”<sup>18</sup>

***The mystery of our humanity shapes our lives—***

During the Michaelmas term of 1997 I stood in the Holy Trinity Churchyard in Headington, a few miles from Oxford, at the grave of C. S. Lewis who died on the same day as J. F. K. and one of Britain’s notable essayists Aldous Huxley. As I thought of some of Lewis’s literary works I recalled several lines from *Prince Caspian*. “You come of the Lord Adam and Lady Eve,” said Aslan, “and that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth.”<sup>19</sup> Honor and shame travel with us through life, never far from the surface.

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<sup>17</sup> “Advice, like youth, probably just wasted on the young,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> “Sir John Gurdon, Nobel Prizewinner, was ‘too stupid for science at school,’” *The Telegraph*, October 8, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia* (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 211-12.

Remember, we are fearfully and wonderfully made, but we are also fallen creatures.

***Unwavering trust demands a degree of risk—***

The man who finds the treasure amidst the dust and clods of earth while plowing one day sells all to buy the field where the treasure lies. The man who sees the pearl of beauty sells all to obtain the priceless jewel. The wager—the risk—a life staked on the ultimate reality of a God who offers us through his heartbeat of grace citizenship in his kingdom. This God who calls each one of us by name is no tame lion. He is a God of surprise and embrace. Brian Harris, principal of Vose Seminary in Perth, Australia, writes “Both Bethlehem’s cradle and Golgotha’s Cross speak of the Divine ‘yes’ to humanity in spite of its indifference, cruelty and fallenness.”<sup>20</sup>

Are you ready to gamble and roll the dice that being in Christ trumps all other realities? Harris declares that “Amazing grace is a cross shaped reality” and “You cannot believe in Easter and live timidly.”<sup>21</sup> So graduates—Be brave! God be with each one of you and Godspeed!

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<sup>20</sup> Brian Harris, *Clothing the Emperor: Contours for a Christian World View* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



# The Dream as a Christian Contemplative Practice

Merrill Hawkins

## Introduction

The world of practiced faith has rediscovered contemplative practices. Long seen as the province of monastics, contemplative practices of many types have become part of the spiritual practices of non-monastics, ranging from the laity actively involved in faith communities to the ranks of the spiritual but not religious. These practices include meditation related prayer forms, such as Centering Prayer and Christian Meditation, associated with specific organizations and leaders, as well as contemplative reading practices, such as the ancient Benedictine practice of *Lectio Divina*.<sup>22</sup> Spiritual direction, part of the formation process for the ministry of the ordained since the second century, has emerged in the last thirty years as a method for lay people to explore the inner life with a trained spiritual counselor. While many varieties of spiritual direction exist, the essential technique involves discussion of one's concerns related to one's spiritual or religious or interior life with a trained guide or companion who holds the conversation in confidence. Non-academic but rigorous programs for spiritual direction training include the Shalem Institute in Maryland and the Mercy Center in California, as well as the Jungian oriented Haden Institute in North Carolina. Institutions of higher learning offer non-degree and degree programs in the field include SMU, Spring Hill College, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, and Creighton University. Janet Ruffing served on the faculty at Fordham University in the field of spirituality and spiritual direction, retiring as Full Professor (with tenure) in 2010 and joining the faculty of Yale Divinity School as Professor of the Practice of Spirituality and Ministerial Leadership. Ruffing's scholarship has worked toward the integration

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<sup>22</sup> Centering Prayer is a contemplative practice promoted by Contemplative Outreach and developed by Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington. See M. Basil Pennington, *Centering Prayer; Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980). Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart, Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006). *Lectio Divina* is an ancient method of reflectively reading a text, including passages from the Bible and from early Christian writers.

of the personality sciences in particular with theology and the study of spirituality.<sup>23</sup> Ruffing joined several other leaders in the spiritual direction movement to create Spiritual Directors International about thirty years ago as a guild for academics, practicing spiritual directors, and spiritual seekers.<sup>24</sup> The academy has an interest not only in teaching contemplative practices and methods, but integrating them into the curriculum of other disciplines. Both the Center for Contemplative Mind and its related Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education promote the study and practice of contemplative pedagogy across the disciplines through annual retreats, a conference, and publication of a peer reviewed journal. Scholars in history, law, education, and religious studies regularly post syllabi that include examples of integrating right brain meditation practices as part of the learning process, much as one might integrate a service learning component into a traditional subject. The Center for Contemplative Mind leads the conversation across disciplines in contemplative pedagogy.<sup>25</sup>

This discovery (or rediscovery) of contemplative practices includes the lesser known tradition of dreamwork as a contemplative practice. While the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament contain narratives where dreams play a central role, and some early Christian literature discusses this contemplative practice, the use of the dream as a religious practice faded by 500 CE. While the rise of psychology with Sigmund Freud returned dreams to a place of prominence in certain approaches to the treatment of mental health

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<sup>23</sup> See <http://divinity.yale.edu/ruffing-rsm>.

<sup>24</sup> See the Shalem Institute at [www.shalem.org](http://www.shalem.org); Mercy Center at [www.mercy-center.org](http://www.mercy-center.org); the Haden Institute at <http://hadeninstitute.com/>; Spring Hill College at <http://www.shc.edu/page/graduate-programs-theology-ministry>; Southern Methodist University at <http://www.smu.edu/Perkins/SpiritualDirection>; Garrett Evangelical Seminary at <http://www.garrett.edu/programs?id=678:spiritual-direction&catid=38>; and Creighton University at <https://www.creighton.edu/christianspirituality/>. For information about Spiritual Directors International, see <http://www.sdiworld.org/>.

<sup>25</sup> See the Center for Contemplative Mind at <http://www.contemplativemind.org/>.

issues, the use of the dream as a Christian contemplative practice came much later in the twentieth century with efforts to apply the thought of Carl Jung to the Christian tradition. This essay explores the Jungian-inspired recovery of the dream as a Christian contemplative practice in the twentieth century and proposes a model for contemplative dreamwork based on another practice, *Lectio Divina*.

Dreamwork in the Christian tradition reached its zenith in the work of an obscure North African Bishop, Synesius of Cyrene. Educated in the traditions of Alexandria and fully open to Pagan and Christian thinking, Synesius wrote *On Dreams* around 405. Considering the dream to be a connection both one's inner depths, as well as a means of communication with God, Synesius encouraged keeping dream journals to record one's nightly images, as well as a day journal to engage in reflections on the possible meanings of the dream. Stressing the non-literal, artistic understanding of the dream, Synesius encouraged reflection on a dream's images as metaphors with obscure meanings that needed exploration. Moreover, the dream provided a source of inner authority that complemented and challenged the outer authority of sacred texts and teachings, as well as the hierarchy enforcing orthodoxy (although Synesius was fully orthodox). Synesius' work represented the height of dream advocacy in ancient Christianity, with the Church shifting to other contemplative practices and restricting these practices to the ordained and the monastics.<sup>26</sup>

Freud's 1899 book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, returned interest in dreams to the Western intellectual tradition, both positively and negatively. This important study, and its abridged version from 1901, *On Dreams*, both propose that dreams represent one way to process repressed matters. Interestingly, two of his leading students, Mortimer Adler and Carl Jung, broke with Freud, especially over his understanding that the unconscious parts of a human contain only repressed and dysfunctional parts of a person. Jung especially disagreed with Freud's conclusion that religion is only about the repression of unhealthy parts of a person's identity. Neither of these two leaders of an alternative form of psychoanalytic theory, however, rejected the importance of the dream, although they attached different meanings to it. Jung, moreover, prepared the way for the rediscovery

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<sup>26</sup> For a modern, accessible introduction to Synesius, see Robert Moss, *The Secret History of Dreaming* (Novato, California: New World Library, 2010).

of the dream as a Christian contemplative practice decades after his own work.<sup>27</sup>

Two twentieth century figures pioneered the integration of Jungian thought and Christianity. Jungian analysts and Episcopal priests, John Sanford and Morton Kelsey, applied many parts of Carl Jung's thought, including his work on dreams, to non-therapeutic Christian practices. Their writings did not call for the replacement of mental health counseling. Indeed, as Jungian analysts, both men treated clients for mental health issues. However, Sanford and Kelsey saw in Jungian methods some modern guidelines for returning several ancient Christian practices to the life of the Church.

Sanford wrote *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language* in 1968. This important volume, reissued twenty years later, traces the history of dream interaction in the Christian tradition, from the Biblical era to the present, noting its eclipse and reemergence. He followed this book with a series of other Jungian informed books on Christian practices, including another dream oriented book, *Dreams and Healing*. This 1978 book provides a cursory examination of several dream texts in the Bible, followed by three chapters on working with dreams (including a therapeutically oriented chapter) and several case studies.<sup>28</sup>

Morton Kelsey, also an analyst and priest, wrote a series of Jungian-inspired books on Christian spiritual practices, including two specifically on dreams. In 1968, Kelsey wrote *Dreams; The Dark Speech of the Spirit*, which he substantially revised into a 1974 book, *God, Dreams, and Revelation* (and a second revision and expansion in

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<sup>27</sup> For strong discussions of the dialogue between Jungian thought and Christianity, see Murray Stein, editor, *Jung On Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Robert L. Moore and Daniel J. Meckel, editors, *Jung and Christianity in Dialogue* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1990); Ann Bedford Ulanov, *Religion and the Spiritual in Carl Jung* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999); and Ann Belford Jung and Alvin Dueck, *The Living God and the Living Psyche; What Christians Can Learn from Carl Jung* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> John Sanford, *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language*, Reprint Edition (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1989); *Dreams and Healing: A Succinct and Lively Interpretation of Dreams* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1978).

1991). The book provides a history of dreamwork and prepares readers for the subsequent 1978 book, *Dreams, A Way to Listen to God*.<sup>29</sup> *God, Dreams, and Revelation* provides the most thorough and accessible history of Christianity's encounter with dreams, as well as a discussion of the role of the dream for the ancient Greeks. The book contains thorough appendices with selections on dreams by numerous early Christian figures, including Tertullian and Augustine. *Dreams; A Way to Listen to God* builds on that historical narrative and provides a lay oriented (non-specialist) approach to working with dreams as part of a contemplative practice connected directly to interior experience.

Unitarian Universalist minister and community educator Jeremy Taylor stands directly in the tradition of Kelsey and Sanford. A prolific author of works on dreaming as a spiritual and contemplative practice, Taylor also has an extensive private practice in spiritual guidance and direction using dreams. His works include *Dreamwork*, and *Where People Fly and Water Runs Uphill*, as well as its revision, *The Wisdom of Your Dreams*.<sup>30</sup> Taylor is one of the first modern dreamworkers to choose deliberately to pursue study of the dream as an exclusively contemplative practice for growth rather than as a therapeutic technique to treat pathologies. As one who does not treat mental illnesses but refers people to professionals, Taylor has focused on the role of the dream for people who are in a state of high functioning mental health. Taylor offers ten foundations of dreamwork, which include: the dreamer has the final word on the meaning of the dream, and all dreams come in the service of health and healing.

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<sup>29</sup> Morton Kelsey first wrote *Dreams; The Dark Speech of the Spirit; A Christian Interpretation* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1968); *God, Dreams, and Revelation; A Christian Interpretation of Dreams*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 1991); *Dreams; A Way to Listen to God* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *Dreamwork* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983); *Where People Fly and Water Runs Uphill* (New York: Warner Books, 1992); *The Wisdom of Your Dreams* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

More recently, Wilkie Au, a professor at Loyola Marymount published *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path*.<sup>31</sup> Au, a professor of spiritual direction at LMU, devotes a chapter to the use of the dream specifically as a path of discernment. Heavily influenced by Jungian thought and married to Jungian analyst, Noreen Cannon, Au's works, as well as those coauthored with Cannon, show a heavy influence of Jungian thought and an interest in the dream. Like Taylor, though, Au approaches the dream as a technique for personal growth, rather than as a therapeutic technique (although the discipline might well have therapeutic implications). Moreover, Au is specifically Christian in this thoughts and goals. His interest in the dream is a Christian practice and not solely a human growth practice. Psychologist John Neafsey wrote that same year an Orbis publication, *A Sacred Voice Is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*, which also has a full chapter on the dream as a way of discovering one's vocation, including exercises for working with one's dreams.<sup>32</sup> More recently, Barbara Holmes, while a professor at Memphis Theological Seminary, wrote *Dreaming*. Holmes, now President of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, provides an excellent, short, five-chapter introduction to the contemplative use of dreams, grounding her work in history, theology, and modern neuroscientific research.<sup>33</sup>

While public writers or community educators have written many of the contemporary works on dreams, especially works that have relevance for the Christian contemplative traditions, at least one venue exists for scholarship in dreams. The International Association for the Study of Dreams, formed in the 1980s, hosts an annual meeting of academics and practitioners of many types. IASD also hosts a peer reviewed journal (published by the American Psychological

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<sup>31</sup>Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au. *The Discerning Heart; Exploring the Christian Path* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> John Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice is Calling; Personal Vocation and Social Conscience* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Barbara Holmes, *Dreaming* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012). I have used Au/Cannon Au, Neafsey, and Holmes in undergraduate and graduate courses at Carson-Newman University.

Association), and publishes a magazine devoted to popular essays.<sup>34</sup> The State University of New York Press has a dream series, which includes numerous books devoted to religious dimensions of dreams. Edited by Kelly Bulkeley, the series' most recent book narrows its focus to the religious dimensions of dreams. Written by Bonnelle Strickling, *Dreaming About the Divine* describes the author's return to the Christian religion after her encounter with Jungian thought and particular dreamwork.<sup>35</sup>

Bulkeley himself has been a prolific author of peer reviewed scholarship and popular essays on dreams. Bulkeley received the Ph.D. in Religion and Psychological Studies from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1992 and has contributed to the growth of the study of dreams through his scholarship and his community work as a dreamwork practitioner. Bulkeley has interdisciplinary research interests, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Representative works include *Dreaming in the World's Religions: A Comparative History* and *The Wondering Brain: Thinking About Religion With and Beyond Cognitive Neuroscience*. Bulkeley has also created an extensive database, the Sleep and Dream Database, which provides a searchable collection of dreams for numerous types of research.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, dreaming as a contemplative practice has provided a small but rich topic for graduate studies in theology. Holly Benzenhafer Redford, a Ph.D. student in religion at Boston University and an ordained Baptist minister, explores dream sharing and Christian spirituality, with a particular interest in the Free Church Tradition, in

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<sup>34</sup> See the website for the International Association for the Study of Dreams at <http://www.asdreams.org/>.

<sup>35</sup> Bonnelle Strickling, *Dreaming About the Divine*, SUNY Series in Dream Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> See Bulkeley's website at <http://kellybulkeley.org/> for extensive information on his work, including the Sleep and Dream Database. See *Dreaming in the World's Religions: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2008) and *The Wondering Brain: Thinking About Religion With and Beyond Cognitive Neuroscience* (New York: Routledge, 2005) for representative works.

her work directed by Claire Wolfeich.<sup>37</sup> Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann has explored dream texts in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament in a brief 2005 essay in *The Christian Century*. While biblical studies scholarship has not devoted extensive research on dream texts, Brueggemann's essay provides a survey of these texts with helpful comments and applications to contemporary society.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to these books, several conferences and one training program in particular promote dreamwork as a Christian contemplative practice. The Haden Institute provides low residency non-degree training for spiritual directors and others with a heavy emphasis on the application of Jungian thought to Christian practice. Founded in 2002 by Episcopal Priest Bob Haden, the Haden Institute has as its mission the promotion of the Jungian and Christian mystical tradition. Numerous people have spent up to four years in guiding readings and weekend didactics on dreamwork, integrating that work into their respective professions as ministers, spiritual directors, educators, and mental health counselors, among other professions.<sup>39</sup> The Haden Institute also sponsors a weeklong conference each summer. First entitled the Summer Dream Conference, the program recently expanded to focus on other forms of spirituality while retaining a strong interest in the dream. In addition to its strong spiritual and contemplative orientation, the summer spirituality conference and the Haden Institute training programs have strong ties to the mental health professions, offering continuing education units in social work and counseling for participation.

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<sup>37</sup>See biographical sketch at <http://www.bu.edu/cpt/profile/holly-benzenhafer-redford/>.

<sup>38</sup>Walter Brueggemann, "The Power of Dreams in the Bible," *The Christian Century*, June 28, 2005, 28-31. Retrieved August 23, 2014 from <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=3218>.

<sup>39</sup>See information on the Haden Institute at <http://hadeninstitute.com/>. I had the opportunity to complete the two year spiritual direction training and the two year dreamwork training offered by the Haden Institute between 2008 and 2012. This work has attracted many people in diverse professions, including other academics. Belmont University religion professors Marty Bell, Judy Skeen, and Ben Curtis have also completed four years of training and integrate this work into their vocations as professors.

Complementing the work of the Haden Institute (and with a great deal of overlap in the personalities involved) is the Natural Spirituality movement associated with Emmanuel Episcopal Church of Athens, Georgia. The Natural Spirituality movement grew out of the work of church member Joyce Rockwood Hudson, author of *Natural Spirituality* and leader of church based dream groups at Emmanuel. The Natural Spirituality movement hosts a midwinter conference on dreams and Christianity and intermittently publishes a periodical entitled, *The Rose*.<sup>40</sup> Many of the same personalities make presentations at both the Haden Summer Conference and the Natural Spirituality Conference and many of the same people attend.

Christian contemplative dreamwork as promoted by both the Haden Institute and the Natural Spirituality movement focuses on group dreamwork more than work with an individual dreamer. Taylor's ten principles of dreamwork inform the approach to working with the dreams, as well as the projective dreamwork approaches of Montague Ullman.<sup>41</sup> Groups meeting to explore a dream select one of the group members to present a dream. After carefully listening to the dream, group members work the dream offering their understandings of the dream's meaning to them (not to the original dreamer). In other words, group members are not interpreting the dream for the original dreamer, but reacting to the dream with active imagination, offering personal responses to the dream. The approach is similar to viewing a work of art in an exhibition and describing the experience of viewing the piece to other people, as opposed to offering a lecture on what the art meant to the artist. The original dreamer listens to the various reactions to her/his dream, perhaps (and often) getting insights into the dream based on hearing how other people have been touched by the dream.

#### Conclusion

Working with dreams as a form of personal growth and as a Christian contemplative practice has gained a small, but vibrant following over the last thirty years. The Christian dream movement provides methods and communities for reengaging this

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<sup>40</sup> See the website for Emmanuel Episcopal Church at <http://www.emmanuelathens.org/>; Natural Spirituality Gathering, <http://www.naturalspiritualityregionalgathering.com/>; Seedwork, <http://seedwork.org/>; and *The Rose*, <http://seedwork.org/the-rose/>.

<sup>41</sup> Montague Ullman, *Appreciating Dreams; A Group Approach* (1996; repr., New York: Cosimo Books, 2006).

ancient contemplative practice grounded in good theology, as well as psychological and mental health approaches. Moreover, the dream movement includes people with firm connections to the institutional Church, as well as those with nominal or former connections.

Dreamwork has a particular affinity with the theologies and practices of the Free Church and Baptist tradition, although this affinity has not been explored in depth (with the exception of Holly Benzenhafer Redford's work at Boston University, mentioned in note thirteen). The Free Church's emphasis on individual autonomy and priesthood of the believer and its de-emphasis on external and hierarchical authority makes the use of the dream, with the notion that the dreamer has the final word on what the dream means, particularly relevant as a contemplative practice. Free Church and Baptist history include unexplored references to dreams, including one such reference in the recollections of the venerable Dallas pastor and church leader, George W. Truett. My experience with this contemplative practice has enriched my own growth and I have hopes that the movement will continue to find a place among other methods of nurturing the interior life and influencing the exterior world.

#### Appendix: A Method for Dreamwork with Lectio Divina

My final project for the two year dreamwork program at the Haden Institute involved crafting a method of working with dreams based on the practice of Lectio Divina. Lectio Divina involves a circular and contemplative approach to reading a text that includes four stages or steps. In the first step, the reader works through a text slowly to get a sense of the basic narrative. In the second step, the reader works through the text, listening for a word or very short phrase. The reader then silently repeats that phrase for a period of time. For the third step, the reader works through the passage, paying attention to what kinds of thoughts or feelings or associations the passage evokes. Finally, the reader completes the passage a fourth time, following this fourth reading with sitting in silence and no particular agenda.

#### Individual Lectio Divina with a Dream

Select a dream that speaks to you. You will follow the four movements of Lectio Divina in reading/praying this dream. If you do not already have a dream journal, you should start one and write your dreams down. The act of writing a dream in a journal is a significant way to honor and work a dream and if you do nothing else but write dreams, you will have accomplished a great deal.

**Lectio/Reading:** When you have selected the dream or the dream has selected you, you are ready for this first movement. Read the dream, slowly and reflectively, but without analysis, two times. (the first movement has two readings). Select a single image or word from the dream (for example, if you dreamed of an owl, you might select the word, “owl,” or you might select the visual image of the owl). Repeat the word or the image in your mind, holding tightly to the word or image. When you find that your mind has wandered, bring your attention back to this anchor of a word or an image. This movement can be timed or untimed, but I recommend 2-3 minutes.

**Meditatio/Meditation:** Open your eyes and read the dream from your journal to yourself again for the second movement. The second movement involves only one reading of the dream. As you read, you are asking yourself, “Where is this dream touching me, how do I feel, where is my energy the highest or lowest, what am I feeling physically and where am I feeling it?” Those are suggested questions for entering the dream and allowing it to touch you. You may even wish to journal your responses. This movement, as with the first movement, should last 2-3 minutes, approximately.

**Oratio/Prayer/Resolution:** Open your eyes and read from the narrative of the dream again. During the third movement, listen for what your hear is trying to say. It is as if, in the second movement, the dream speaks to you and now in the third movement you speak to the Maker of the dream. What do you wish to say or pray or offer to the Holy? This could be a prayer about something that is bothering you or a word of thanks or a request for guidance and help with discernment. This could also be a specific resolution on your part to take some action in the next few days. The idea is that having been touched by the dream, the dreamer now speaks to the maker of the dream. It is good to put this resolution in the form of a clear sentence. This sentence might be, “I am going to \_\_\_\_\_ over the next five days.” It might be a completion of this phrase, “This dream is pulling me to say \_\_\_\_\_,” or “My prayer for me is \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Contemplatio/Contemplation:** Open your eyes and read a final time the dream. After this final reading, settle into the silence and let whatever happens, happen. The goal is to be in the silence that has been cultivated by the other three movements. Interestingly, this goal might be cultivated by returning to the word of the first movement, the receptive feelings of the second movement, the offering of oneself of the third movement, or simply sacred silence, which would be the ideal. After two or three minutes, the fourth movement closes.

Group Lectio Divina of a Dream:

Group Lectio Divina follows the same four movements, as a group exercise. In group lectio, though, the group selects a dream of one of the members and applies the four movements to the dream. This is not group interpretation of the person's dream. Instead, Group Lectio Divina is a group contemplative exercise, using the dream as a text for the entire group. The dreamer gives the dream to the group, with the group trusting that this dream has a value for each member's own personal contemplation and spiritual growth, as well as that of the group as a whole.

The group must have a facilitator familiar with the method of Lectio Divina, as well as with methods of working with dreams, such as the Haden Method. The facilitator sees who has a dream that they wish to give the group. If there are multiple dreams, the group decides which one is to be given for the benefit of those present. This selection might be by vote or by drawing lots. Once the dream is selected, the person offering the dream reads the narrative of the dream for each of the four movements, with the facilitator guiding the process.

**Lectio/Reading:** The dreamer reads the dream twice, in the first person, present tense, with the facilitator inviting everyone to listen for the word or image that captures them. The group is then invited, after the second reading of the dream in this movement, to focus on the word or image for two minutes. At the end of the two minutes, each person is invited, but not required, to offer their single word or image, with no comment at all, to the group.

**Meditatio/Meditation:** The dream is read again for this second movement. This time, the dream will be read only once. Ideally, a person other than the original reader/dreamer will read the narrative of the dream this second movement. If the group is mixed gender, this reader should be the opposite gender from the first reader (that is a traditional method in group Lectio Divina). To meet this ideal, group members should bring their dreams typed. The facilitator, before the reading of the dream, invites everyone to see where this dream touches them. What is this dream giving to them? Keys to listening to the dream include paying attention to what one is feeling emotionally or physically during the dream. After the reading, the group sits with this intention of listening to and feeling the dream for 2-3 minutes. At the end of the silence, all members are invited, but not required, to tell in one sentence, with no commentary, what they experienced. For example, a person might say, "I felt \_\_\_\_\_ from this dream" or "This dream reminded me of \_\_\_\_\_."

**Oratio/Prayer/Resolution:** The facilitator leads the group to enter the third movement of Lectio Divina with the dream. A third

person, of the opposite gender of the most recent reader, reads the dream narrative (if possible). In this movement, the group is now responding to the message of the dream. The group members are invited to consider what they will offer as a result of hearing this dream. This offering could be a prayer. It could also be a resolution to take a specific action in the next three to five days. The group sits with this for two-three minutes after the reading. When the time has ended, the facilitator invites each person in the group to offer a small response with no commentary. This response could be, "My prayer is \_\_\_\_\_" or "My hope is \_\_\_\_\_" or "This week, I will \_\_\_\_\_" (thinking of a specific action). Anyone may speak, but no one must speak.

Contemplatio/Contemplation: The dream is read a final time for this movement, preferably by someone else. In the final movement, the group is invited to enter deep, contemplative silence, allowing the dream to take each person to that place. After the dream is read, the group sits in silence, with no particular agenda, for 3 minutes. With more experienced groups, this could be extended to a longer time of five minutes. Finally, the facilitator calls the group out of this movement and each person has an opportunity to offer reflections and reactions to the group. No one must speak, but anyone can speak. It is at this point that group members can offer commentary and reflections. The entire response, though, should be no more than fifteen minutes maximum. Of course, if the energy dies down, the facilitator would shift to the final activity.

Benediction/Closing: the facilitator returns the dream to the original dreamer and thanks the dreamer for giving it to the group. If the dreamer brought a typed narrative of the dream, then the return of the dream is a literal action. The group then closes in silence with a sacred ritual (prayer, a reading, silence), with each person invited at some point to hold the person to their right in a special way of concentration. The group is dismissed.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> I am grateful to many people for shaping my thoughts and experiences in creating this essay. The content grows largely out of reading and group experiences I had from 2008-2012 with the Haden Institute. I am particularly appreciative of the program and format, including the bibliography developed by Bob Haden. Haden's program connected me with two people in particular who shaped my thinking and with whom I worked on an individual basis in the study of dreams: Jerry Wright, a Jungian Analyst, and Diana McKendree, a Jungian-oriented Dreamworker and retreat leader.



## Believing, Understanding, Explaining: The Place of Religious Studies in the Confessing Christian University

Andrew Smith

[2014 Russell Bradley Jones Lecture]

Today I am attempting a foolish thing: to speak to a subject on which many people are better prepared to speak, and about which many people have already offered better formed opinions than I am going to offer. I am not here to say something which has never been said before. Instead, I am here to deal with a topic which I consider to be of the utmost importance to this institution, Carson-Newman University, at this very moment in its history. That topic is the place of Religious Studies, that is, the study of religion as a diverse human phenomenon, in the curriculum of the confessing Christian university.

When I refer to a confessing Christian university, I am referring to a university that struggles to be faithful to two poles of commitment. On the one hand, the *confessing* university is one in which administrators, faculty, and most of the students (as is the case here at Carson-Newman) hold dear the affirmations of the Christian faith – both its key doctrines and its ethical teachings. My Methodist friends even speak about orthopathy, the idea that the emotional rhythms of one’s life ought to be tuned to the Christian faith even as our thinking and behaving ought to be tuned to it – and I think they are on to something there.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, a Christian university is one where this mutual dedication to the Christian faith is an important aspect of the teaching and learning that takes place, as well as being a controlling consideration in administrative decision making. Additionally, a confessing Christian university ought to be one that resists the pull of what James Tunstead Burtchaell referred to as the “dying of the light,” the process by which colleges founded by churches eventually, through a gradual process, abandon their commitment to the Christian faith.<sup>44</sup> I believe it is safe to say that the time when a school could be considered “Christian” simply because of its affiliation with a denomination has come and gone. Christian

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<sup>43</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 149.

<sup>44</sup> James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), ix.

universities are necessarily institutions that have made a choice to retain and cherish the Christian faith as a chief aspect of their identity.

At the same time, confessing Christian *universities* are absolutely obligated to be universities in the fullest sense of the word. I remember what Ezra Cornell said in 1856 of his plan to found a university with the help of the state of New York: “I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.” Not only is the university to be a place where everything can be studied, it is also a place where all methods of study are encouraged. When both of these commitments – a commitment to study everything by all possible methods – are kept, scholars, both faculty and students, have the tools to ask well-framed questions about natural and human phenomena and to seek answers to those questions. These answers, procured through sound methods, may or may not confirm received beliefs, but the university is to be a space where commitment to good method supersedes commitment to received opinions, no matter how time-honored or venerated they may be.

When the identity of the confessing Christian university is stated this way, it should immediately be apparent that every institution that could be described by this phrase teeters constantly on the edge of an acute identity crisis. Each pole of our identity would love to dissolve the other, and even as we speak an army of Christian scholars seeks a way by which the confessing Christian university might be steered through the Scylla and Charybdis necessarily implied by our dual commitments to the church and the academy. I cannot hope to deal with this problem today in any detail. I only hope to deal with one small part of it.

This tiny aspect is whether and how the confessing Christian university might foster the study of religion as a human phenomenon. Stated more plainly, how should we study religions that are not our own? Can our study of “world religions” move beyond the strictly theological? If it can, and we learn a few new methods of study along the way, should we turn those methods upon our own faith in order to know it better?

At first blush, one might expect a confessing Christian university to be a place where the study of religion would be embraced readily. After all, the Christian university has been in the business of teaching religion from day one. Departments of Religion, Theology, Bible, Christianity, and Christian Studies have indeed been loci for the study of Christianity as their faculties have affirmed revelatory claims, taught and practiced methods of scriptural interpretation, and made normative comments about the things Christians ought to believe and do. When scholars trained in these methods approach other religions,

however, the results are mixed. Some Christian scholars might choose to affirm with Isaiah that other gods are merely lifeless idols, “nothing at all.”<sup>45</sup> Others might follow Paul and suggest that members of some other religions worship demons.<sup>46</sup> Some other scholars might recognize that the methods in which they are trained are simply not suited to the examination of religions other than Christianity, and shy away from including the study of these other faiths in their curriculum. Still others, occupying a different place on the theological spectrum, might suggest that other religions function as a sort of preparation for the gospel, or that they do in fact teach important values even as they fall short of presenting the truth that Christianity offers.<sup>47</sup> Short of an out-and-out turn to theological liberalism, however, the theological methods in which scholars of Christianity have typically been trained – exegesis and theological elaboration – are absolutely inadequate to the task of the scholarly study of religion if the traditional goals of the modern university – understanding and explaining – are taken as the yardstick by which scholarly success is to be measured. At risk of belaboring the point, theological methods simply cannot help us understand what other religions are really about; they cannot help us explain why they exist, why their adherents believe and behave as they do, or how they do or do not make sense as an embedded part of their social and cultural environment. There is nothing wrong with theological discourse. It is arguably at the heart of what we do in the confessing Christian university. In a world where religious tension is acute to the point of costing lives, however, and where understanding and explanation are so desperately needed, we cannot afford to rest satisfied with theological discourse.

When Christian scholars venture out into the secular world of Religious Studies seeking methodological alternatives to theology, however, they find a world at war with itself. Scholars of religion are not in agreement among themselves about the proper methods to be used when studying religions to which one is an outsider. The first group of scholars we can safely refer to as “Phenomenologists.” Phenomenologists are those that affirm that religion is a phenomenon *sui generis*, that is, that it is a thing qualitatively different from things that are outside this category of religion, and that religion therefore should be studied by a method or methods properly suited to its unique

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<sup>45</sup> Isaiah 44:9-20

<sup>46</sup> I Corinthians 10:20

<sup>47</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 169-174.

nature. Although scholars that fall broadly within this group are quite diverse, they would probably agree that the key to studying religions well is what is referred to as *epoché*, or suspension of belief. Ninian Smart, in his *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*, describes it this way:

Among religionists [phenomenology] means the use of *epoché* or suspension of belief, together with the use of empathy, in entering into the experiences and intentions of religious participants. This implies that, in describing the way people behave, we do not use, so far as we can avoid them, alien categories to evoke the nature of their acts and to understand those acts. In this sense phenomenology is the attitude of informed empathy. It tries to bring out what religious acts mean to the actors.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, in order to understand a particular religion properly, one must set aside one's own beliefs and doubts and try to put oneself in the shoes of an adherent of that religion, trying to understand that faith on its own terms. Through close ethnographical observation, the scholar of religion should attempt to grasp the various aspects of a religious system, such as the ritual/practical dimension or the mythic/narrative dimension in such a way that, after accounting for the diversity within that tradition, members of that religion could accept what the scholar says about it. While the phenomenologist of religion is not required to believe what an adherent claims about the "focus" of their religion (a term Smart uses to avoid reference to a god or gods, given that many religions do not posit the existence of such a being or beings), they are required to take it seriously as the actual focus of devotion within a tradition.

On the surface, this sounds harmless enough. But another group of scholars dedicated to the study of religion shies away from phenomenology, sensing that its goal of understanding religions on their own terms ultimately fails to explain them in terms that the rigor of the university demands. A variety of names could be and have been applied to scholars of religion suspicious of phenomenology, but I tend to use a term most often associated with sociologist Peter Berger: "methodological atheism."<sup>49</sup> Scholars of this tradition, frequently hailing from social scientific disciplines such as sociology, psychology,

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<sup>48</sup> Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967), 100.

and history, tend to assume that the job of the scholar of religion is not to understand a religion on terms its adherents could accept, but to explain religious phenomena as human constructions. A methodological atheist rejects out of hand any explanation that includes reference to things transcendent and instead interprets religious traditions as historical, social, cultural and/or psychological phenomena. Bruce Lincoln of the University of Chicago might have put it best even as he put it most uncompromisingly:

The conjunction ‘of’ that joins the two nouns in the disciplinary ethnonym ‘History of Religions’ is not neutral filler. Rather, it announces a proprietary claim and a relation of encompassment: History is the method and Religion the object of study. [. . .] History of religions is thus a discourse that resists and reverses the orientation of that discourse with which it concerns itself. To practice history of religions in a fashion consistent with the discipline’s claim of title is to insist on discussing the temporal, contextual, situated, interested, human, and material dimensions of those discourses, practices, and institutions that characteristically represent themselves as eternal, transcendent, spiritual, and divine.<sup>50</sup>

For Lincoln, the secular study of religion should be dedicated to discovering the changing, constructed, and thoroughly human basis of religious beliefs and behaviors. It is no wonder that many critics of this position have labeled and dismissed it as “reductionism,” accusing methodological atheists of missing the beating heart of religion as they seek to explain it as a merely human phenomenon. For phenomenologists, methodological atheists do more than simply explain religion: they explain it away.

Even as phenomenologists have criticized methodological atheists for being “reductionist,” however, these non-phenomenological scholars have been rather critical of phenomenology. Donald Wiebe, in his *The Politics of Religious Studies*, was particularly critical of Ninian Smart’s attempt to articulate a method of studying religion that would avoid reducing religion to the sum of its visible parts while also attempting to resist the temptation of ultimately granting the veracity of metaphysical claims made by the adherents of various studied religions. Wiebe finds that Smart’s entire notion of the study of religion “reveals a lack of precision” and that it is not “clear whether the study of religion in fact implies endorsement, if not of a particular religion, then of religion in general.” Wiebe goes on to suggest something that I

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<sup>50</sup> Bruce Lincoln, “Theses on Method,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8, no. 3 (1996): 225.

suspect is true: “the more general study of religion is close to the religio-theological study of religion that does not operate within such an agnostic framework. The principle of bracketing [that is, the *epoché*], then, is a kind of crypto-theological enterprise, predisposing the student of religion to assume the ‘truth’ of religion (that is, to assume that the Focus of religion exists).”<sup>51</sup> In other words, Wiebe agrees with English priest Ronald Knox that “Comparative religion is an admirable recipe for making people comparatively religious.”<sup>52</sup> But to be fair, phenomenologists tend to ask in return whether the methods of scholars like Wiebe leave any room for religious belief or not, or whether they even want to.

There are many people that could give you a tour of the contemporary world of Religious Studies better than I have here. Still, however, the stage is now set for asking if and how the members of the confessing Christian university can appropriate the methods of either or both of these competing schools of thought for the sake of understanding and explaining other religions in a non-theological way.

I’ll turn to phenomenology first. On the upside, phenomenology provides a method of studying (and teaching!) other faiths that makes it possible for us to at least attempt to view those faiths and their adherents sympathetically. As an institution seeking to prepare students to be “educated citizens and worldwide servant leaders,” we can hardly avoid the fact that leadership in the contemporary world absolutely demands a certain amount of interreligious understanding and sympathy. Religious diversity is here to stay and indeed will become more pervasive; women and men that want to lead in government, in education, in health care, and in other fields simply must be literate in the major religious traditions of the world. Physicians and nurses that understand the religious orientations of their patients will be able to give them better care. Civil servants that understand the religious beliefs of their constituencies will better serve those constituencies. Educators that understand the faiths of their students will be more effective in the classroom. Phenomenology can help all of us learn to interact sympathetically with those whose faith we do not share.

At the same time, phenomenology presents a challenge. In its insistence that students of religion bracket their own suppositions as they approach other religions in order to understand those religions on

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<sup>51</sup> Donald Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 56-57, 65.

<sup>52</sup> Ronald Knox, *The Hidden Stream: Mysteries of the Christian Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), 108.

their own terms, this method requires us as evangelical Christians to do something that we are not accustomed to doing: setting aside our own theological commitments just long enough for a Muslim, or a Buddhist, or an adherent of any other faith to tell us what their faith is really about. This necessarily entails some risk, because when we let down our theological barriers long enough to hear what a member of another faith is saying, we may receive a flash of insight from that tradition that we did not expect; we may even find that tradition attractive enough to consider joining it outright, or at least incorporating a portion of its teachings or practices into our own spiritual lives. While this is not the goal of the phenomenological study of religion even in a secular environment, there is no point in denying that effective education, by putting people into genuine contact with new things, changes people, sometimes in unexpected ways. To this possibility I can only offer these words of Lesslie Newbigin, a passionate missiologist, and certainly no disinterested scholar of religion: “Obedient witness to Christ means that whenever we come with another person (Christian or not) into the presence of the cross, we are prepared to receive judgment and correction, to find that our Christianity hides within its appearance of obedience the reality of disobedience. Each meeting with a non-Christian partner in dialogue therefore puts my own Christianity at risk.”<sup>53</sup> The cross means vulnerability, not know-it-all triumphalism. When our study of non-Christian faiths causes us to imagine our own religion as one among many and puts us into dialogue with members of those other faiths, we stand not against our faith but with the one who calls us to listen, to serve others, and to love. There is no true Christianity that does not have the vulnerability of Christ at its very heart.

Methodological atheism, on the other hand, requires totally separate consideration. In a sense, Christian scholars have long been familiar with the idea of studying religion as a constructed, human phenomenon. After all, Christians have been perfectly comfortable with explaining other faiths as human constructions even when they have lacked the terminology that reductionists can provide. The obvious problem that methodological atheism presents in the confessing Christian university is that the same methods that we might use in studying other religions might eventually be turned on our own. In fact, in any university worthy of the name, that is, in a university where anything can be chosen as an object of study, and can be studied using any method, Christianity cannot be excluded from the scrutiny of the tools of the sociologist, the psychologist, and the historian. In the

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<sup>53</sup> Newbigin, *Open Secret*, 182.

process, the dual commitments of the confessing Christian university threaten to dissolve each other. What will we do when social scientific study of Christianity shows that certain doctrines, purportedly drawn directly from the Bible, have actually arisen as responses to social, cultural, or political change? Is it acceptable to admit that our faith, our reverence for uncreated things that do not change, changes sometimes? Some might conclude that the Christian faith as we have practiced it is simply sacrosanct and should be shielded from academic scrutiny. Others might simply throw the Christian faith away as a relic of a bygone age, an unfortunate victim of university methods of study. In either case, the confessing Christian university has lost its soul and purpose for existing.

It is easier to describe this problem than it is to offer a solution. I don't have a solution, but I do have one exhortation. There is much in Christian history about which we have no reason to be proud. The Christian faith and its leaders accepted human chattel slavery as the status quo not just in the United States for much of our nation's history, but in the Roman Empire as well. Christians have been just as skilled at starting and advocating wars as they have been in averting and opposing them. The history of Christian doctrine also proves that the story of Christian theology is full of false starts and blind alleys. What is called "orthodoxy" today only became so through long periods of struggle during which theological combatants, all of whom knew they were right, sought to make their own viewpoint the established one, sometimes even using the power of government to suppress the heretics with whom they disagreed. As Karl Barth writes, "a history of Christianity can only be written as a story of the distress which it makes for itself."<sup>54</sup> Not everything Christians do is right, even if they think it is right. Not everything Christians think and believe is true, even if they think it is true. It is impossible for the sensitive person to look back on Christian history and believe that Christianity, as a set of beliefs and practices, simply fell out of the sky immaculate and, even today, has adherents that practice this perfect faith flawlessly. Instead, it ought to be clear that contemporary Christianity is a diverse product of a series of social, cultural, religious and political forces that continues to shape and be shaped by its environment. In other words, it is a human phenomenon, subject to analysis using the best methods the university has to offer.

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<sup>54</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/2, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Part 2, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1956), 337.

But this is not cause for despair. Revelation and religion are not the same thing. While the Christian religion is the thing that we as Christians have created around God's revelation in Jesus Christ, we confess that God's revelation in Christ is given from outside of us, to us, as a gift. God's revelation is not a laundry list of doctrines or ethical guidelines, although these are certainly things I could not do without. Instead, God is revealed personally in the resurrection, an event in which Jesus brings the Father to humankind, and because of which human beings can know God. In his *The Epistle to the Romans*, Karl Barth proclaims that

In the resurrection the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it... The Resurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year A. D. 30, inasmuch as it there 'came to pass', was discovered and recognized. But inasmuch as the occurrence was conditioned by the Resurrection, in so far, that is, as it was not the 'coming to pass', or the discovery, or the recognition, which conditioned its necessity and appearance and revelation, the Resurrection is not an event in history at all.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, the central event of God's revelation to humankind did actually happen, but happened because of God's action and not because it flowed naturally from other preceding historical circumstances. Furthermore, because of the resurrection's character as gift and separation from the regular march of history, it remains inaccessible to the methods practiced by scholars of religion. This is not to say that we tell scholars that they must keep their hands off the resurrection. It is to assert that the methods of the university, which are not unlimited in their scope and power, do not make examination of the resurrection possible.<sup>56</sup>

There is a difference, then, between God's revelation in Jesus Christ and the Christian religion. They are not the same thing. God is revealed in the resurrection of Christ, an event which scholars, like the rest of us, can only approach through faith. The Christian religion, on the other hand, is a complex and diverse set of beliefs and behaviors that fallible human beings have built up around this event. While none

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<sup>55</sup> Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 30.

<sup>56</sup> I am aware that adherents of many other faith traditions might make similar assertions about important founding events in their own histories.

of us has built perfectly, some of us have built better than others. I am reminded of what Paul told the Corinthians: “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.”<sup>57</sup>

I am convinced that the process of subjecting Christian beliefs, behaviors, institutions, and indeed the entire Christian religion to critical scrutiny in the confessing Christian university should not only be tolerated, but welcomed, at the very least because our vocation as a university demands it. More than that though, social scientific studies of Christian beliefs and behaviors, when paired with good theological analysis, may help us to ferret out those aspects of our practice which are plainly a result of our illicitly marrying the church to a particular nation, political ideology, cultural assumption, or social more. Why pass up a chance to see if the church is up to code?

To conclude, then, it seems as if I have taken a stab at answering the questions I asked in the beginning. The confessing Christian university *can* be a place where university methods of studying religion can be employed, but not without risk. The risks involved, however—the risk of vulnerability before a person that does not share your faith, the risk that aspects of your faith might actually be shown to be culturally-conditioned constructions—are risks that ought to come part-and-parcel with the Christian life fully lived. In other words, the confessing Christian university need not loosen its commitment to educating students without shame in the Christian tradition in order to make religious studies a constituent part of the curriculum. In fact, the call to educate students ready to lead in the twenty-first century may well demand it.

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<sup>57</sup> I Corinthians 3:10-15 NRSV

## The Growing Tent of Modernism: Evolution and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy among Tennessee Baptists in 1925

M. Alex Carver

In the early twentieth century, two conservative cultural movements emerged in the United States. The first, a conservative brand of Christianity known as fundamentalism, focused on combating theological modernism—essentially the belief that religious ideas ought to adapt to fit modern culture.<sup>58</sup> The second movement, termed antievolutionism, aimed to repel the increasingly popular theory of Darwinian evolution. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy began as a dispute among Northern Protestant denominations in America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initially, the conflict centered on differences of belief among Northern Protestants concerning traditional Christian doctrines about Christ, the Bible, and the relationship of Christianity to the wider culture. Antievolutionism, on the other hand, was a later movement that sought to show the dangers and implausibility of evolutionary theory and fought to keep Darwinism out of America's schools. Historians believe fundamentalism and antievolutionism emerged as separate, distinct phenomena and thus deserve to be studied independently. Compelling evidence, however, suggests that Baptists in Tennessee merged these two debates together in 1925, perhaps in part due to the media's portrayal of the Scopes 'monkey' trial in Dayton, Tennessee as a contest between fundamentalism and modernism.

Fundamentalism arose among evangelicals in America's Northern Protestant denominations primarily in response to the growing threat of modernism. It was fundamentalism's "militant opposition of modernism" that most clearly demarcated the movement from other conservative religious traditions of the day.<sup>59</sup> While many fundamentalists later enthusiastically supported the antievolution movement which swept through the United States during the 1920's, the earliest expressions of fundamentalism were far more conciliatory and pluralistic concerning evolution. *The Fundamentals*, a twelve-volume series published from 1910-1915, "represent the movement at a

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<sup>58</sup> George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd Ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 146.

<sup>59</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4.

moderate and transitional stage before it was reshaped and pushed to extremes by the intense heat of controversy,”<sup>60</sup> and they reveal a rather amicable relationship between a number of early fundamentalist leaders and evolutionary theory. David Livingstone shows that at least three of the contributors to *The Fundamentals*—James Orr, George Frederick Wright, and B.B. Warfield—held generally positive attitudes toward evolutionary theory.<sup>61</sup> Warfield in particular readily accepted a modified version of Darwinian evolution, and Livingstone argues his scientific philosophy “was thoroughly infused with evolutionary concepts.”<sup>62</sup> Thus in the early years of the movement, fundamentalism was not entirely at odds with evolutionary explanations for the diversity of life.

After 1920, fundamentalist voices that regarded evolution and orthodox Christianity as basically compatible became much rarer. Nevertheless, historians have recently recognized that antievolutionism and fundamentalism still existed as distinct phenomena during this period and that the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and evolution debate were largely treated as separate disputes. George Marsden writes, “Most conservatives in the [Northern] denominations joined the outcry against the evils of evolution, but Darwinism never became a major issue in the church controversies themselves.”<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, and most significantly for this study, “Anti-evolution usually did not appear on lists of fundamental doctrines to be used as tests of orthodoxy.”<sup>64</sup> Certainly in the North then, modernism was distinct from evolutionism, and fundamentalism was not identical to antievolutionism.

In his 2011 doctoral dissertation, Andrew Smith presents the current scholarly consensus that, even in the early twentieth-century South, antievolutionism and fundamentalism were not one and the same movement. He notes, “In the most recent treatment of Fundamentalism in the South, William R. Glass’ *Strangers in Zion*:

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<sup>60</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 119.

<sup>61</sup> David N. Livingstone, “B. B. Warfield, the Theory of Evolution and Early Fundamentalism,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 58 (1986): 69-83.

<sup>62</sup> Livingstone, “B. B. Warfield, the Theory of Evolution and Early Fundamentalism,” 83.

<sup>63</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 169-170.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

*Fundamentalists in the South, 1900-1950*, the author clearly brackets concerns about evolution out of his analysis.”<sup>65</sup> Antievolutionism had a much broader scope and constituency in the South that was not identical to fundamentalism. Additionally, fundamentalists and antievolutionists were concerned with very different theological and practical issues. Fundamentalism centered around affirming such doctrines as the divine inspiration of Scripture, Christ’s deity, virgin birth, vicarious atonement, bodily resurrection, and immanent, visible return, as well as the historical reality of Christ’s miracles.<sup>66</sup> Antievolutionism, by contrast, focused on questions concerning the veracity of the scientific claims of evolution, particular interpretations of early Genesis, and the perceived detrimental social and moral impact of evolution on society at large.<sup>67</sup>

The distinction between these two phenomena, especially as seen in dialogue concerning the doctrinal issues that distinguished fundamentalists from modernists, is visible among Southern Baptists in Tennessee during the early 1920’s. However, 1925 marks the beginning of a substantial shift in thinking on the relationship between the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and the evolution debate among Tennessee Baptists. Baptists in Tennessee, to varying degrees, merged these two debates together in 1925. Specifically, Baptists expanded the categories of modernism and fundamentalism to include a broader range of issues than those characterizing the initial controversy among Northern Protestants, with beliefs about creation and evolution chief among these issues. In doing so, Tennessee Baptists incorporated the evolution debate into the already existing fundamentalist-modernist paradigm of disagreement, casting evolution as “modernism” and “anti-supernaturalism” while representing antievolutionism as fundamentalist, orthodox Christianity. One of the contributing factors to this shift in thinking was likely the famous Scopes ‘monkey’ trial in Dayton, Tennessee in the summer of 1925.

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<sup>65</sup> Andrew Smith, “‘Flocking By Themselves:’ Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Bureaucratization of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919-1925” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2011), xi.

<sup>66</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 103.

<sup>67</sup> Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 37-43.

### **Antievolutionism and Fundamentalism among Tennessee Baptists Pre-1925**

In June of 1922, in the midst of the escalating national debate on evolution, J.D. Moore—editor of Tennessee’s Baptist denominational newspaper, the *Baptist and Reflector*—bemoaned the religious press’ obsession with the topic of evolution: “The time has come for the discussion of evolution, as such, to cease as a feature of the religious press.” Moore argued, “It is the plain duty of every Baptist to dismiss the controversy and rally to the support of Christian education.” In 1922, some Baptists evidently viewed the evolution debate not as a threat to the fundamental doctrines of the faith but instead as a distraction from more important tasks with which Baptists should be concerned. Moore concluded the article by lauding William Jennings Bryan’s recent address to the Northern Baptist Convention for espousing loyalty to the Word of God, which Moore believed would build a fortification “against all sorts of modernism,—evolution along with other phases of a Christless culture.”<sup>68</sup> Moore painted evolution as just one of the many dangers of modernism and not one that deserved undue attention from Baptists.

Another editorial from July 1922 illustrates evolution’s position at the periphery of the fundamentalist-modernist debate before 1925. In this article, Moore cast a wide net for what counted as “modernism”—much wider than the original doctrines espoused by Northern fundamentalists. He defined modernism as including any doctrines “which are understood to be out of harmony and hence in disagreement, with that which is Apostolic.” As an extreme example of “modernism” in the widest possible sense, Moore wrote: “‘Infant Baptism,’ being without foundation in the Bible, we take it, is a sort of ‘Modernism’ although it has been practiced for several centuries.” Significantly, however, after denouncing numerous forms of “modernism,” Moore noted, “It may be observed that we have not mentioned ‘Evolution’ so far in this discussion; and for the reason we regard it as one of the minor forms of rationalistic thought and only one of the phenomena which occur whenever and wherever religious belief bows to re-search or mental investigations and does not accept Revelation as final.”<sup>69</sup> Again it is clear that Tennessee Baptists initially

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<sup>68</sup> J.D. Moore, “Graduated in Evolution,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 29 June 1922, 2.

<sup>69</sup> J.D. Moore, “Modernism,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 6 July 1922, 2.

viewed the evolution debate as, at most, tangential to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, even when “modernism” was taken in the broadest possible sense of the term.

One year later, in July of 1923, Moore still viewed evolution as “but one of the products of this error”—the “error” in view here being modernism in general and “German Rationalism” in particular.<sup>70</sup> At this time, evolution was still, in the eyes of Tennessee Baptists, a separate, derivative issue only loosely associated with modernism. Two *Baptist and Reflector* articles appearing in January and February of 1924 further support the idea that, before 1925, evolution did not factor prominently in Baptist rhetoric concerning fundamentalism and modernism. The first article reports excerpts of an address detailing the specific beliefs of fundamentalists and modernists given by Dr. M. Ashby Jones, pastor of the Ponce De Leon Avenue Baptist Church in Atlanta. The reporter claimed, “Dr. Jones fairly and truly represented the general attitudes now taken by the ‘Fundamentalists’ and ‘Modernists.’” Strikingly, there is no reference, either explicitly or implicitly, to the evolution debate.<sup>71</sup> In the second article, E.K. Cox aimed to expose “what the real issue is between the Modernists and the Conservatives or Fundamentalists.” Again, there is no mention of the evolution debate or particular views of creation, yet Cox did emphasize the doctrines of Christ’s virgin birth, vicarious atonement, bodily resurrection, and visible return as dividing fundamentalists and modernists.<sup>72</sup> These sources show that, before 1925, evolution was not widely viewed as a key modernist doctrine among Tennessee Baptists. Baptists in Tennessee generally weighed in on the fundamentalist-modernist controversy without making evolution a defining issue in the debate. However, this began to change substantially in 1925.

#### **Merging the Debates: Shifting Perspectives on the Relationship between Antievolutionism and Fundamentalism among Tennessee Baptists in 1925**

As 1925 progressed, Baptist voices linking evolution with modernism and antievolution with fundamentalism became louder and more

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<sup>70</sup> J.D. Moore, “Modernism,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 19 July 1923, 2.

<sup>71</sup> Hugh S. Wallace, “Fundamentalists and Modernists,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 24 January 1924, 4.

<sup>72</sup> E.K. Cox, “What is the Issue?” *Baptist and Reflector*, 7 February 1924, 5-6.

widespread, reaching their climax in the turmoil and aftermath of the Scopes trial. As early as February 12, 1925, J.L. Campbell, Chair of Bible at Carson-Newman College, distinguished between “Modernist” views of the creation of humans and those of “the Bible.” In an article delineating the positions of “Modernism” and “Christianity” on classic fundamentalist concerns such as the supernatural inspiration of the Bible, views of biblical prophecy, biblical signs and miracles, Christ’s deity, atonement, and return, Campbell wrote: “The Bible declares that God created man in his own image. This the Modernist denies. He claims that man came up from the brutes.”<sup>73</sup> Linking creation doctrines that excluded evolutionary human origins with traditional fundamentalist doctrines became increasingly prevalent throughout 1925. Furthermore, there was a growing trend to identify evolution as the central and most devastating component of modernism. This trend was not universal, however, as there remained a less common element of thought persisting throughout 1925 that understood evolution as merely one aspect of the larger modernist movement.<sup>74</sup>

Far more prominent than this perspective, however, were Baptist voices that equated evolution with modernism, and conversely, antievolutionism with fundamentalism. In a May 1925 article titled, “Fundamentalism Versus Modernism,” W.M. Wood wrote, “Modernists, evolutionists, liberalists and rationalists are of one blood and it is polluted blood. Fundamentalists are of a different school and are not and never can be in agreement with modernists.” Wood further equated modernists with rationalism and evolution, saying, “These modernists are the disciples of Descartes and Darwin.” While Wood clearly associated evolution with modernism, in defining “the Creed of the Fundamentalist,” he stuck to six of the standard fundamentalist doctrines (Inspiration of the Scriptures, Christ’s deity, virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, and immanent, physical return) without naming antievolutionism as a defining feature of fundamentalism.<sup>75</sup> Particularly in the first half of 1925, some Baptists

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<sup>73</sup> J.L. Campbell, “Modernism,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 12 February 1925, 4.

<sup>74</sup> See John D. Freeman, “Shall Supernaturalism Survive?” *Baptist and Reflector*, 3 September 1925, 3 and John D. Freeman, “Unitarians Fight Fundamentalism,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 29 October 1925, 2.

<sup>75</sup> W.M. Wood, “Fundamentalism Versus Modernism,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 14 May 1925, 4.

were more apt to identify evolution as modernism than to include antievolution as a core fundamentalist doctrine.

From the late summer months on, Baptists in Tennessee moved from merely associating evolution with modernism to declaring that antievolutionism was a central fundamentalist belief. John D. Freeman, the newly appointed editor of the *Baptist and Reflector*, articulated this position in a July article billed as “a brief comparison between the beliefs of Modernists and Fundamentalists.” In addition to differentiating fundamentalists from modernists on the basis of traditional fundamentalist doctrines, Freeman defined antievolutionism as an essential tenet of fundamentalism and presented evolution as a key modernist belief. According to Freeman:

Creation with [modernists] is the result of evolution. [. . . ] Man came as the crowning piece of evolution. He is not descended from a monkey or an ape as so many claim. Man and the modern ape are distant cousins, both having evolved from an ancient common ancestor. [. . . Fundamentalists] believe that [God] created the original parents of every great group of plants, fishes, fowls, and animals which have ever lived upon the earth.  
[. . . ] God created man by a special act. [. . . ] He did not do it through any process of evolution [. . .].<sup>76</sup>

The inclusion of detailed positions on evolution and the divine method of creation given in this comparison of fundamentalist and modernist beliefs represents a significant shift from the way many early fundamentalists viewed this issue, and it is a dramatic development in the way Tennessee Baptists represented the debate between fundamentalists and modernists. As previously discussed, evolution and creation did not factor prominently in Baptist discourse on fundamentalism and modernism pre-1925. Yet this amalgamation of antievolutionism and fundamentalist doctrines became common throughout Tennessee in 1925.

Baptist identification of evolution with modernism and antievolution with fundamentalism was not confined to urban population centers or denominational spokesmen. Baptists in rural areas voiced similar perspectives. A Herbert Haywood, of Blue Mountain, Mississippi, just south of the Tennessee border, wrote to the *Baptist and Reflector* concerning the effect that “evolution—known also as rationalism,

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<sup>76</sup> John D. Freeman, “Modernism Versus Fundamentalism,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 2 July 1925, 5.

modernism, naturalism, etc.” was having on evangelism.<sup>77</sup> Haywood treated evolution as synonymous with these other belief systems in keeping with the wider trend. Furthermore, records from annual Baptist Associational meetings reveal similar attitudes in rural East Tennessee. Five different Associations in East Tennessee included in the minutes of their annual meetings some version of the following resolution:

We must educate our young people in schools that stand four square for God’s word in its entirety as the revealed word from God; in schools where the Holy Bible is the accepted rule for faith and practice, and where the doctrines taught therein are clearly set forth and honestly believed; where the story of creation as taught in Genesis is an accepted fact, and not a senseless allegory; where the miracles of Jesus are accepted from His immaculate conception to His glorious ascension; where character is considered of more value than cattle and where regeneration is taught as the basis of reformation.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Herbert Haywood, “Evangelism and Evolution,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 6 August 1925, 7.

<sup>78</sup> Jefferson County Association of Baptists, *Minutes of the Sixth Annual Session of the Jefferson County Association of Baptists: Held with Antioch Church, August 6-7, 1925*, 13-14, Middle and East Tennessee Baptist Archives, Jefferson City, Tennessee. See also in the Middle and East Tennessee Baptist Archives: Big Emory Association of Baptists, *Minutes of the Fifty-First Annual Session of the Big Emory Association of Baptists: Held with the Rockwood Baptist Church, Rockwood, Tenn.*, September 3-4, 1925, 10; Clinton Baptist Association, *Minutes of the Seventy-Third Annual Session of the Clinton Baptist Association: Held with Indian Creek Baptist Church*, September 23-25, 1925, 6; McMinn County Baptist Association, *Minutes of the Second Annual Session of the McMinn County Baptists Association: Held with Mt. Harmony Baptist Church near Niota, Tennessee*, September 17-18, 1925, 6; Providence Association of Baptists, *Minutes of the Fifty-third Annual Session of the Providence Association of Baptists: Held with the New Bethel Baptist Church in the Second District of Roan County, Tenn.*, September 30-October 1, 1925, 12-13 (microfilm).

In this resolution, Baptists placed a literal reading of the Genesis creation story alongside traditional fundamentalist concerns such as the miracles of Jesus and the virgin birth. J.H.O. Clevenger, of the Chilhowee Association, urged Baptists “to keep the mind of our children free from the influence and power of those who are trying to poison the mind against the Genesis order of creation and the Deity of our Christ.”<sup>79</sup> Most notably, resolutions like these demonstrate Baptists’ widespread inclusion of a literal reading of early Genesis as a test of orthodoxy, alongside other beliefs typically associated with fundamentalism.

### **The Impact of the Scopes Trial on Baptist Perspectives of the Relationship between Antievolutionism and Fundamentalism**

Why did Tennessee Baptists broaden the traditional categories of fundamentalism and modernism to include beliefs about evolution in 1925? One possible explanation derives from the media’s portrayal of the Scopes trial as a showdown between fundamentalism and modernism. One of the defense’s expert witnesses was the University of Chicago divinity school’s Shailer Mathews, “the preeminent voice of modernism among American Christians.”<sup>80</sup> Mathews famously attempted to reconcile evolutionary science with the Bible using a modernist interpretation of Scripture: “The writers of the Bible used the language, conceptions and science of the times in which they lived. We trust and follow their religious insight with no need of accepting their views on nature.”<sup>81</sup> On the prosecution’s side, activists like William Bell Riley and William Jennings Bryan trumpeted the irreconcilability of evolution and Christianity. Edward J. Larson explains, “The popular press seemed intent on pitting fundamentalists such as Bryan and Riley against modernists such as Mathews and Fosdick, or against agnostics such as Darrow, all of whom scorned the middle.”<sup>82</sup> According to

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<sup>79</sup> Chilhowee Baptist Association, *Minutes: Forty-First Annual Session of the Chilhowee Baptist Association: Held with Calvary Baptist Church of Alcoa*, August 12-13, 1925, 16, Middle and East Tennessee Baptist Archives, Jefferson City, Tennessee.

<sup>80</sup> Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 118.

<sup>81</sup> “Dean Divinity School Thinks Bible Is Not in Conflict with Evolution,” *Chattanooga Times*, 10 July 1925, 14. Quoted in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 118.

<sup>82</sup> Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 120-21.

Larson, “Middle ground did exist between modernism and fundamentalism but gained little attention in the public debate surrounding the Scopes trial.”<sup>83</sup> The *Baptist and Reflector* followed suit in its depiction of a fundamentalist prosecution team combating a modernist defense counsel,<sup>84</sup> and thus Baptists who read either their local newspapers or the denominational paper would have received exposure to this representation of the trial. Baptists viewed the Scopes trial as encompassing far more than merely the issue of evolution: “With men of the type of Darrow and Malone, the purpose and goal is to rid American schools of the last influence of belief in the Bible as a supernatural revelation.”<sup>85</sup> When one considers that the press branded the Scopes trial as a battle between fundamentalism and modernism, the Bible and science, Christianity and agnosticism, it is not surprising that Baptists would add evolution to the paradigmatic list of issues that defined and distinguished fundamentalism from modernism. This explanation is corroborated by evidence from records of annual Association meetings among East Tennessee Baptists in the months immediately following the Scopes trial.

One Association portrayed evolution as the foundational theory upon which modernism was built. This extreme depiction very likely resulted from the heated polemics surrounding the Scopes trial. J.H. Sharp, in the Providence Association’s report on Christian Education, wrote:

The cohorts of infidelity have not been idle, and before we were hardly aware, many of our institutions of learning were shot through with German materialism now known to us as modernism, based on the theory of evolution. The State of Tennessee has passed a law prohibiting the teaching of this type of infidelity in schools supported by public funds. The national organization which fosters infidelic theories, have money to employ great leaders like Darrow, Malone and others, to fight our laws and to fasten upon us, if possible, the soul daminnng [*sic*] and deadening theories of Modernism. Let Baptists everywhere refuse to vote for any man from Governor to Constable who would not uphold and strengthen our laws

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<sup>83</sup> Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 119.

<sup>84</sup> John D. Freeman, “Modernism in Action,” *Baptist and Reflector*, 23 July 1925, 2.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

against evolution, the unknown theory upon which Modernism feeds.<sup>86</sup>

Sharp spoke of evolution as the precursor and foundation of modernism, and it appears that his dire concern about the spread of evolution was founded at least in part by the perception that organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and the University of Chicago employed the likes of Darrow and Malone at the Scopes trial in an attempt to force modernism upon Tennesseans by means of the public schools. This violent reaction against evolution—viewed here as the underlying theory upon which all other forms of modernism were founded—appears to have been conditioned by a perception of the Scopes trial as a modernist assault against Tennessee, the Bible, and fundamentalist Christian faith.

The belief that the Scopes trial revealed the imminent threat of modernism infecting the minds of school children was not an isolated sentiment among Tennessee Baptists. Baptists of the Chilhowee and Big Emory Associations expressed similar concerns.<sup>87</sup> P.W. Moore, in the 1925 Chilhowee Association report on Sunday Schools, commented:

We have recently seen in Tennessee, to the surprise of most of us, the extent the world is willing to go to undermine our faith in the Bible and the Christ of the Bible... We until recently thought that teachers who did not believe the Bible were away in some great institution where our children would never be effected [*sic*]. Now we know that they are in the public schools of Tennessee, only a few we believe, and yet there are

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<sup>86</sup> Providence Association of Baptists, *Minutes*, September 30-October 1, 1925, 12.

<sup>87</sup> Big Emory Association of Baptists, *Minutes*, September 3-4, 1925, 10: "The question of Education has never before commanded the attention of the whole nation as now... Children of tender years have been taught in many instances, that the miracles of the Bible are not trustworthy, the story of certain an allegory, the life of Jesus a deception and sin, salvation, and the resurrection unreasonable and discredited."

united efforts in certain quarters to see that we have work of such teachers.<sup>88</sup>

In response to these concerns about the education of children in Tennessee, the Executive Board of the Harrison-Chilhowee Institute, a Baptist school supported by the churches of the Chilhowee Association, published the following resolutions:

Whereas Agnosticism is endeavoring to destroy our faith in the Bible and Jesus Christ:

Whereas, Tennessee is endeavoring to protect her future citizenship from such agnosticism and disrespect for the Holy Bible...We, the Executive Board of the Harrison-Chilhowee Institute, together with the local Baptist Church, First Chilhowee, do hereby declare our implicit faith in the Bible account of the creation of man; the deity, virgin birth, and atonement of Jesus Christ...Second: That we do not believe in any system of evolution whatsoever which regards man as having descended from a lower form of animal life.<sup>89</sup>

The references here to “Agnosticism” and “disrespect for the Holy Bible” probably allude to Clarence Darrow and John Scopes’ defense counsel. It is significant that the Harrison-Chilhowee institute felt the need to reaffirm their commitment to both antievolutionism and the deity, virgin birth, and atonement of Christ. Though the Scopes trial technically only was concerned with public schools teaching the theory of evolution, the media’s portrayal of the Scopes trial as a struggle between modernist and fundamentalist readings of Scripture may well have prompted Tennessee Baptists to simultaneously affirm both antievolutionism and classic fundamentalist doctrines, both of which appeared to be under fire at the Scopes trial.

A couple months after the trial, Freeman cast the whole affair as the culmination of a long-brewing conflict between “supernaturalism” (fundamentalism) and “anti-supernaturalism” (modernism).<sup>90</sup> Baptists, both during and after the trial, perceived the

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<sup>88</sup> Chilhowee Baptist Association, *Minutes*, August 12-13, 1925, 11.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>90</sup> John D. Freeman, “Shall Supernaturalism Survive?” *Baptist and Reflector*, 3 September 1925, 3.

Scopes trial as about far more than just evolution. It was viewed as an assault on Tennessee,<sup>91</sup> the Bible, fundamentalism and its essential doctrines, Southern Christianity,<sup>92</sup> and Southern society at large. A common response among Tennessee Baptists was to broaden the categories of modernism and fundamentalism to include evolution as one of the distinguishing issues between the two camps. Baptists incorporated evolution into the already existing paradigm of dispute between fundamentalism and modernism. J.E. Skinner's address at the December 1925 Tennessee Baptist Pastors' Conference, "The Fundamental Doctrines of the Bible," readily demonstrates this. Skinner contended, "The Divine Creation of Man...without the aid of natural processes of whatever name, is a Fundamental Doctrine of the Bible." For Skinner,

Every doctrine of Holy Writ is Fundamental. [. . .] I give place to no living man on an any of these fundamental principles—Divine Creation, the Fall of man, the Deity of Christ, His Virgin Birth, His Miraculous Ministry, His Vicarious Atonement, His Bodily Resurrection and Ascension, His Visible Return; Salvation by Grace Through Faith, Regeneration and Sanctification by the Holy Spirit; the Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, or any other principle taught in the Word of God [. . .].<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>John D. Freeman, "Modernism in Action," *Baptist and Reflector*, 23 July 1925, 3: "And right next to me sits a garrulous, loud, pompous exponent of the doctrines of brute ancestry, setting forth his ideals of the littleness, the bigotry, the stupidity of Tennesseans. He ridicules her law, rails at her law-makers, castigates her Governor, and in other ways manifests the ugliness, narrowest and most anarchistic spirit."

<sup>92</sup>John D. Freeman, "Unitarians Fight Fundamentalism," *Baptist and Reflector*, 29 October 1925, 2: "The stronghold of real Christianity has been the South. It has not been infected with the poisonous ideas and notions of foreigners...Pure religion and undefiled has its most earnest and loyal advocates in the Southern denominations."

<sup>93</sup>J.E. Skinner, "The Fundamental Doctrines of the Bible: An Address Delivered Before the Tennessee Baptist Pastors' Conference," *Baptist and Reflector*, 10 December 1925, 1.

In the eyes of Skinner and other Baptists of the time, fundamentalism was no longer narrowly defined as adherence to a handful of key doctrines concerning Christ and the Bible. It now included, among other things, fidelity to a specific doctrine of creation and the rejection of almost any form of evolution.

### **Conclusion**

During 1925, Baptists in Tennessee significantly altered their view of evolution's relationship to fundamentalism and modernism compared to preceding years. Before 1925, evolution was no more than loosely associated with modernism, and antievolutionism was not widely held as a fundamental doctrine, on par with the divine inspiration of Scripture, Christ's deity, virgin birth, vicarious atonement, bodily resurrection, and immanent return, or the historical reality of Christ's miracles. However, during 1925, Tennessee Baptists tended to incorporate a conservative position on evolution into the doctrinal standards that classified one as a modernist or fundamentalist. According to a Michigan Baptist minister, "To make belief in Genesis and belief in Christ stand or fall together is absurd. The two beliefs are on different levels."<sup>94</sup> Yet this was precisely what Tennessee Baptists did in 1925. Convincing evidence suggests that one factor in the synthesis of antievolutionism with fundamentalism and evolution with modernism was the Scopes trial—specifically, the depiction of the trial as a clash between fundamentalists and modernists. A strong modernist presence on the defense, combined with the prosecution's fundamentalist components and the media's intent on pitting the two against one another, may have contributed to Tennessee Baptists vigorously identifying evolution with modernism and antievolutionism with fundamentalism during 1925. While there may have been other factors at work which prompted this shift, the Scopes trial stands out as the most attractive candidate, given the evidence available. This shift in understanding concerning evolution and fundamentalism may not have been unique to Baptists, or even to Tennesseans of this period; future researchers may wish to examine the attitudes of different religious groups in Tennessee and other areas of the South. Nevertheless, antievolutionism and fundamentalism appear to have overlapped considerably in the wake of the Scopes trial, at least among Tennessee Baptists in 1925.

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<sup>94</sup> "Two Extreme Views," *Chattanooga Times*, 1 July 1925, 4, quoted in Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, 118.

### Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the support of Al Lang, archivist at the Middle and East Tennessee Baptist Archive at Carson-Newman University, for his assistance in tracking down various sources used in this project. I wish to especially thank Dr. Andrew Smith, the Church Historian of Carson-Newman's Religion Department, for his insight and advice as I have worked on this project, and for teaching me what it means to write history.

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## Disarming the Heart: Spiritual Formation and Prophetic Action

Ken Sehested,

[Honors Program Lecture delivered December 5, 2013]

We're going to begin by viewing an 8-minute video I produced after my 3-week stay in Iraq in February 2003. I returned home just before the "shock and awe" bombing campaign that launched the US invasion of Iraq. I was there with about 40 other members of Christian Peacemaker Teams, trying to communicate that a war on Iraq would have disastrous consequences. My purpose was to put a "face" on those we considered our "enemy." Most of the photos in this video are of ordinary Iraqi citizens, though there are a few from a peace march we organized through downtown Baghdad.\*

My topic is "Disarming the Heart," the connection between spiritual formation and prophetic action. What does confessing "Jesus is Lord" have to do with war and the many levels of injustice that sow the seeds of war?

Let me begin with 3 short texts:

"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence."

—*Genesis 6:11*

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

But I say to you, Love your enemy.'" —*Matthew 5:43-44*

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." —*Romans 12:21*

Some of you caught the news earlier this week that the Republican National Committee tweeted a note recognizing the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rosa Parks's historic action on a bus in Montgomery, Ala., which ignited the modern Civil Rights Movement.

The GOP's note drew much criticism because of its claim that Parks's action resulted in "ending racism." Fact is, though, that in the U.S. average white families' annual income is twice that of average African

[\* video can be viewed at "*Journey to Iraq*,"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTSVa9vFhS4> –ed.]

American families. And accumulated wealth for white households is 6 times that of blacks'.<sup>1</sup>

Today is another major Civil Rights Movement anniversary. Fifty-eight years ago this evening African Americans in Montgomery gathered in the Holt Street Baptist Church for a mass meeting to decide whether the one-day bus boycott should be continued. What is interesting is that the very first song they sang that evening was a hymn many of you know, "What a Fellowship," with the refrain of "leaning (on Jesus), leaning (on Jesus), safe and secure from all alarm, learning, leaning, leaning on the Everlasting Arms."

There was a time in my life I hated that song. After a brief career as a traveling teenage youth evangelist, the wheels came off my faith. And those words "leaning on Jesus," made me feel like you do when someone rakes their fingers across a chalkboard. Gave me the shivers. That song represented everything I despised about Christian faith. Its passivity, its sentimental emotional quality, its withdrawal from the world into little insulated clans of self-congratulation and self-righteousness. Like the lyrics from another old Gospel hymn, "Jesus Paid It All." So if Jesus paid it all—said it all, did it all—all we have to do is agree and get busy raising money for a church family life center.

But then, in the mid-'80s, I watched "Eyes on the Prize," the award-winning documentary series on the Civil Rights Movement, and I learned that the first hymn sung at that Holt Street Baptist meeting in 1955 was . . . you guessed it . . . "Leaning on Jesus." And suddenly, it hit me: when you can't lean on the police to protect you—there was a hostile white mob threatening to torch the church that night—when you can't depend on local or state or national politicians to protect you, "leaning on Jesus" is actually a revolutionary song of courage, of defiance in the face of overwhelming odds and vitriolic hatred. Ever since the escaping Hebrew slaves were caught between the Red Sea ahead and Pharaoh's war chariots behind, "fear not" (Exodus 14:13) has been the nonviolent war cry of the people of God. And ever since Jesus reminded his disciples that the world will hate you—"Blessed are you when people persecute you" (Matthew 5:11)—people of faith have known that the promise of the Beloved Community in the age to come is constantly contested by empires in the age at hand.

In other words, that night in 1955 the church rediscovered its original identity.

Some years ago a friend contacted me and asked me to speak at a Baptist conference on peacemaking. In her letter, she said: "I want you to speak on 'Why should we work for peace when folk just need to get saved?'" I knew Carol had a great sense of humor, so I thought she was speaking tongue-in-cheek. So I kept reading her letter, thinking she'll

get around to her real topic. But no. That was it. "Why should we work for peace when folk just need to get saved?"

Then I realized what a genius she was! Whether framed exactly this way or not, this is the core question which represents the crisis at the heart of biblical faith.

My argument with the church is that we are perpetuating a warped spirituality. We have suffered spiritual deformity in ways that bracket the realities of violence and poverty and oppression, ignoring them (at worst) or confining them (at best) to the margins of our attention. We have segregated "spiritual" matters from "physical" or "material" ones, emptying our preaching and teaching of its ability both to bless and to condemn. The "salvation" we offer is more like cotton candy. Coming at you, it looks bigger than life; but then you realize it's mostly air and empty calories. And what substance there is will rot your teeth, maybe turn your stomach.

Reigning notions of spiritual reality are vacuous, full of sound and fury but signifying nothing. This reminds me of that "Family Circus" cartoon on Mother's Day many years ago, where the young boy turns to his sister and says, "I'm going to give Mom a 'spiritual' bouquet and save my money for a catcher's mitt." Then there's that full-page newspaper ad headlined: "For a spiritual uplift on low monthly terms, contact your local BMW dealer."

Spirituality, American style.

Some of you have read C.S. Lewis's classic book, *Screwtape Letters*. In his satirical book, *Screwtape*—the devil-like figure—is responding to a question from Wormwood (his nephew, one of hell's angels on earth), about the case of one particular human that Wormwood is attempting to subvert. *Can't get him to quit praying all the time*, Wormwood complains. *Screwtape* offer this bit of advice: "It is, no doubt, impossible to prevent his praying for [his mother], but we have means of rendering the prayers innocuous. Make sure that they are always very 'spiritual,' that he is always concerned with the state of her soul and never with her rheumatism."<sup>2</sup>

Baptist theologian James McClendon has this to say: "We do not believe that the God we know will have to do with *things*. Yet this biblical materialism is the very fiber of which the first strand of Christian ethics is formed."<sup>3</sup>

When Scripture is emptied of this kind of "materialism," when spirituality becomes domesticated, when souls become separated from bodies, the result is legislation like that passed early in this country's history. "It is hereby enacted," says the 1706 Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York, "that the baptizing of any Negro, Indian or Mulatto Slave shall not be any Cause or reason for setting them at

Liberty."<sup>4</sup> The result is also manifest in giving the name "Jesus" to a ship carrying African slaves; or in christening a U.S. trident submarine, which cradles in its bowels the equivalent explosive ordinance equal to all the bombs dropped by all sides in World War II, as *Corpus Christi* (Body of Christ).

For several weeks during the Iraq War, the Pentagon's website featured the photo of an Abrams tank where a Marine had painted the phrase, "The New Testament." Is it any wonder that Muslims in Third World countries believe the U.S. is engaged in a war against their religion? The last six countries we have attacked, since 2001, are predominantly Islamic countries.<sup>5</sup> And even now the threat of attack on Syria is real.

Frankly, I often grit my teeth when I'm around folks who talk a great deal about "spiritual" things. Back in the old days, when all airline flights had a smoking section, I sometimes requested a seat back with the smokers. Figured there would be less chance of my sitting next to someone who wanted to know if I'd accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior.

To think of "spiritual" realities and "material" or "physical" realities as separate categories is a serious mistake for biblical people. It is much closer to the truth to say that, in biblical terms, the word "spiritual" functions as an adjective that describes and characterizes certain kinds of physical realities. There is no more central notion to Scripture than the notion that God's Spirit traffics in earthly affairs.

The Hebrew word *shalom*, roughly translated into English as "peace," is a comprehensive term denoting health and wholeness, salvation (with God) and liberation (from the bonds of oppression). *Shalom* is not some divinely-directed psychotherapy to help individuals live a happier, healthier, maybe even wealthier life. *Shalom* is what happens when relationships of every sort, from the most personal to the most public, are repaired and restored and redeemed.

Let me turn toward home with a few summary statements.

*First*, in biblical terms, redemption is *for* the world, not *from* the world. Among our most pressing needs is a fleshly faith, one that embraces rather than brackets history, to overcome the crippling effect of disembodied spirituality. Here's how the Psalmist puts it: "I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (27:13). The meaning of the Incarnation, which we celebrate at Christmas, is this: God is more taken with the agony of the earth than with the ecstasy of heaven.

*Second*, vital faith is always personal but never merely private. Saying that faith has a "social dimension" is redundant at best. Forgiveness is not the ultimate consumer acquisition. The grace-

imparted soul does not rejoice in itself but in reweaving the torn fabric of relationships, what in the early rabbinic tradition was named *tikkun olam* (the repair of the world).

*Third*, doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God are not separate statements but three ways of saying the same thing. The disarming of the heart is intertwined with the disarming of the nations. Long before Karl Marx made the case for economic determination of human choice, Jesus said: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34). Which means, in effect, the most revealing theological documents we have are our budget.

*Fourth*, the God of the Bible is most attuned to the places where creation is battered, bruised and broken. If we are spiritually formed—attuned to the melody of Heaven—we will by nature attend to the places where hell has broken out on the earth. As Karl Barth observed, “To clasp hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.”<sup>6</sup> If we are to overhear the Word of God, we, too, must locate ourselves in sustained and compassionate proximity to those broken places. Not as ethical action but as positioning ourselves to hear the goodness of the News of Heaven.

*Fifth*, we need a spirituality that will convict and not merely convince. As T.S. Eliot once noted, we know too much but are convinced of too little. Vital faith is a bet-your-life proposition. Clarence Jordan wrote: Faith is not belief in spite of the evidence. Rather, faith is life lived in scorn of the consequences.<sup>7</sup> In other words, theological convictions will raise blisters on your feet and calluses on your hands.

*Finally*, being captivated by God’s forgiveness, becoming enchanted with the vision of the coming Reign of God, animates our engagement with the agonized, the abandoned, and the afflicted. As it soaks into our lives, grace displaces the fears which drive so much of our behavior and frees us to live beyond the confines of our stingy little egos. “The one to whom little is forgiven,” Jesus said, “loves little” (Luke 7:47). But when the gratuitous love of God grips our heart it creates its own momentum, prompting a similar gratuitous love of the neighbor, of the abused, even of the enemy. For as St. Augustine said, “We imitate whom we adore.”

Do you remember how Zacchaeus made his profession of faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior? “Lord, if I have defrauded anyone, I restore it fourfold; and I give half of my goods to the poor” (Luke 19:8). Did Jesus respond by saying, “Oh, that’s Social Gospel stuff. Right now we’re focusing on the state of your eternal soul”? No, he said, “Today salvation has come to this house.”

This, then, is our evangelistic message to the church and to the world:

Disarm your hearts! Repent of your habits of violence and injustice; return to the One who bore you in mercy; rebuild ruined neighborhoods; restore marginalized peoples; resume the politics of forgiveness and an economy of manna (*sufficiency*); revive an ecological relationship with the created order; reject the escalating culture of violence and renew your commitment to building a culture of peace.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Annie Lowrey, "Wealth Gap Among Races Has Widened Since Recession," New York Times,, April 28, 2013

<sup>2</sup> p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> James William McClendon Jr., *Systematic Theology: Ethics*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1986), p.91.

<sup>4</sup> "An Act to Encourage the Baptizing of Negro, Indian and Mulatto Slaves," Senate of the State of New York, passed October 21, 1706, in "Colonial Laws of New York, Vol. 1, pp. 597, 598, quoted in Daniel Calhoun, *The Educating of Americans*, (NY: Houghton Mifflin Co.,1969), p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia. Not to mention a majority-Muslim province of the Philippines, where US Marine-led training evolved into combat missions against the Abu Sayyaf rebels in the Sulu Archipelago.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Robert McAfee Brown, *Spirituality and Liberation: Overcoming the Great Fallacy*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Dallas Lee in *The Cotton Patch Evidence*, (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1971), p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> Excerpted from the "Open Letter to the 18th Baptist World Congress" statement of the fourth international Baptist peace conference, 2-4 January 2000, Melbourne, Australia, drafted by Ken Sehested.

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