Pittsburgh Theological Journal

PITTSBURGH
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

SPRING 2015

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Staff of the Pittsburgh Theological Journal

Editor-in-Chief:

Brian J. Lays is a senior M.Div student from Denver, Colorado. He completed his undergraduate studies at Whitworth University in Spokane, WA and worked at a church in Vail, CO before moving to Pittsburgh. He plans to pursue ordained parish ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Karyn Bigelow is a senior completing a M.Div and a certificate in Urban Ministry. Once finished at PTS, Karyn hopes to go into government advocacy for faith-based organizations.

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Allan M. Irizarry-Graves, a native of Youngstown, Ohio, just completed his Junior year at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Allan is enrolled in the M.Div program and is also pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Urban Ministry with the Metro-Urban Institute.

Cover Art

Front cover art by Karyn Bigelow

The front cover, entitled "Tamar's Shame" was designed by Karyn Bigelow, senior M.Div student. The mosaic was created for the class: Gender, Power, and the Pulpit, as a creative proclamation. The mosaic is based on the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. The mosaic depicts how Karyn imagines the shame and guilt that Tamar must have felt after being raped and rejected. The brokenness of the ground and house is symbolic of the brokenness that Tamar must have felt and the brokenness that was in the house of David. This same brokenness is represented by the darkness that is coming down and the setting of the sun.

Back cover art by Sue Blank

This is a small quilt made for Dr. Tuell's Book of the Twelve class. It is a modern-day interpretation of Habakkuk 1. Habakkuk laments that there is no justice in the land - even the Israelites own courts are perverted and do not execute justice. This wall quilt is about the Clothesline Project - an art event about violence towards women. The different colors of t-shirts are decorated with words or memories concerning different kinds of violence experienced by those who produce the t-shirts: rape, battering, incest, violence because of sexual orientation, etc. White shirts are in memory of those who have been murdered. I put on three shirts for women of my home congregation who were murdered; two were teenage girls who were murdered by ex-boyfriends, and one was an elderly woman murdered because of a domestic situation. I made this in memory of these women.

The relationship to Habakkuk is that often our courts are unable to protect women against domestic violence. There is no justice in many cases of rape or dating violence because of blaming of the victim. And because of the shame, there is no lasting help for victims of incest or abuse due to sexual orientation.

Letter from the Editor

May 2015

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2015 edition of the Pittsburgh Theological Journal! Our annual publication seeks "to contribute to the development of pastor-theologians by promoting theological reflection, intellectual integrity, and practical wisdom." We have pursued this end this year through the gathering, editing, and publishing of work from the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The pages that follow are the fruit of our labor!

Our 2015 Journal consists of four research essays, six sermons, three poems, three book reviews and one short story. One author, Laurie Gourdet, has produced a sermon with a corresponding poem and piece of art. All three have been published together to reflect their thematic coherence. Dr. van Driel's sermon "The Peace of the Lord be with you always!" was preached in our chapel the day after our president, Dr. William J. Carl III, announced he would be retiring at the end of the 2015 school year. It addresses theological education at a time when a new president will bring new vision and priorities to our campus. Indeed, we are in the midst of a time of transition.

Another transition was forced upon our community this year as well: The passing of one of our most beloved professors, Dr. Johannes "Jannie" Swart. On the first day of classes, September 8, 2014, Jannie was playing frisbee with students on campus when he collapsed and passed away from a heart attack. His loss was felt all year, and our final section, in memoriam, provides some reflections from those close to Jannie on the impact he had on our community, both academically and relationally. Jannie contributed to our 2014 Journal, and all of his contributions to our seminary are deeply missed.

As Editor-in-Chief, I am deeply grateful to all who submitted work for potential publication in our journal. Space constraints require us to be selective in what we choose to publish, but we are pleased that such a variety of people affiliated with our campus put forward their best work. I'm most grateful to Karyn Bigelow (Senior), Danielle Ramsay-Estelle (Middler), and Allan Irizarry-Graves (Junior). They have been an excellent board of editors and the journal would not be what it is without their hard work and dedication to excellence.

In the service of Christ,

Brian Lays

Editor-in-Chief

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Embracing the Mystery of the Divine

A common thread I find among C.S. Lewis' books *The Magician's Nephew*, *Till We Have Faces*, and *The Pilgrim's Regress* is the wild, humbling, yet trustworthy nature of the divine in its interaction with the human main characters. This sounds similar to Rudolf Otto's concept of "the numinous," expressed through the Latin phrase *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which is the fearful and fascinating mystery of "the holy." This essay considers how experiences of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* redirect human suffering, longing, and complaint into a deeper understanding of the inscrutable, yet trustworthy God.

Gregory D. Jones, Jr.

Greg Jones is a PTS Junior, son of Tina Jones and the Sunday School Superintendent at First Baptist Church of Bridgeville, PA.

C.S. Lewis tales often feature characters who come into contact with the divine, both allegorically or explicitly. Such literature recalls the Bible's invitation for all audiences to encounter God through its bookend descriptions of His mysterious holiness. This journey of experiencing God's presence progresses from Exodus, at the base of earthly Mt. Sinai, where "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16; all Scriptural references are from the RSV). Finally, the audience climbs to the throne room in Revelation, and is greeted by a similar, yet heavenly scene, where "From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God;" (Revelation 4:5). This encouragement to not just know of God, but to embrace His unfathomable nature extends beyond the pages of the Bible. Churchgoers, theologians and artists throughout the ages have labored to express the human conception of God's holiness. Perhaps the aforementioned disciplines owe gratitude to German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto. He uses the term "numinous"[1] as a descriptor that unifies the biblical and human perspectives of the divine experience. He expresses the numinous through the Latin phrase *mysterium tremendum et fascinans,* which describes the effect of human interaction with God's holiness. This effect is of special interest to Lewis as well, which is evident through an examination of the divine experiences detailed in *Till We Have Faces, The Magician's Nephew,* and *The Pilgrim's Progress.* This essay will establish that *experiences of mysterium tremendum et fascinans redirect human complaint, suffering, and longing into a deeper understanding of the inscrutable, yet trustworthy God.*

The thesis of this essay requires several key definitions. "The divine" is defined as the inscrutable, yet trustworthy nature of God. This view is supported by Rudolf Otto's understanding of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which he explains in *The Idea of the Holy*. Considering the numinous aspect of *mysterium,* Otto writes that it is "wholly other. . .that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible,

1 Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), xvi-xvii.

and the familiar, which therefore "falls quite outside the limits of the 'canny', and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment."[2] Otto connects this to *tremendum*, which associates quaking fear with reverence. Otto describes this as he writes, "man in his 'profaneness' is not *worthy* to stand in the presence of the holy one. . .his own entire personal unworthiness might defile even holiness itself."[3] Otto suggests that *tremendum* creates terror, yet also the promise of becoming something greater through *fascinans*. He describes this as the "independence of the positive content of this experience from the implications of its overt conceptual expression, and how it can be firmly grasped, thoroughly understood, and profoundly appreciated, purely in, with, and from the feeling itself."[4] Overall, Otto's definition of the numinous allows for an appreciation of God's incomprehensible and absolute nature. His analysis demonstrates how humanity could be simultaneously repelled from and attracted to the divine, amidst its mysterious and terrible transcendence, in the promise of becoming something more than what they were before.

It is in this promise behind the mystery that one can trust its purpose, as exemplified through Orual's experience in *Till We Have Faces*. Lewis uses her complaint with the non-Christian Ungit to hint at the purpose behind divine mystery in a manner comparable to Job's questioning of God. Both complaints vivify the argument that a mysterious God, without justification or explanation, demands something from humans through suffering that they cannot give. Job's suffering narrative leads him into a preoccupation of being divinely persecuted by a seemingly unresponsive God. Wrestling with the notion that God allowed his hardships, and unable to find any comfort in the inadequate explanations of his friends, Job laments, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments" (Job 23:3-4).

Likewise, Orual is consumed with bitterness and resentment toward the gods, whom she is convinced are dedicated to keeping her from any beauty or happiness. She provides the raw complaint against the

2 Ibid., 26.
3 Ibid., 54.
4 Ibid., 34.

divine as her scathing accusation against Ungit unfolds from her, almost involuntarily. She mires in her devouring love for Psyche and how she is separated from her. Orual seethes, "There's no room for you and us in the same world. You're a tree in whose shadow we can't thrive. We want to be our own. I was my own and Psyche was mine and no one else had any right to her."[5] Job and Orual voice the unfiltered expressions of human suffering in their audacity towards the divine.

It is important to note that the adversity of Job and Orual initially blinds them to the purposes of the divine. Both are driven towards a personal, yet unreliable understanding to apprehend their situations. At first, Job and Orual see the divine as the source of their problems. Yet, through the veiled experience of complaint, they achieve the first steps on the avenue towards the revelation of the divine, in reaching the end of their confidence in themselves. From the depths of their souls, they cast their complaint toward the higher power, despite their limited understanding. It is fully fitting that Job and Orual are answered in an overwhelming, numinous experience beyond their full comprehension. This experience of m*ysterium tremendum et fascinans* finally establishes humbling human limitations in contrast to astonishing divine transcendence. Even in the midst of calling God to account for His actions, Job is found totally unprepared for the divine answer. God suddenly appears from the whirlwind and reverses Job's challenge through four chapters. God commands, "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it" (Job 40:2).

After the veil is lifted from her face, Orual is similarly required to answer the judge of Ungit, in the form of her complaint. Her reaction parallels Job's, as they find themselves and their complaint insignificant in the face of the mystery. Where the answer from humanity is required, Orual involuntarily provides the inadequate, yet genuine human response. When she beholds the nature of her complaint, she finds it contained in a book far less impressive than her grand intent for the expression of her anguish. When Lewis describes it as "a little, shabby, crumpled thing…a vile scribble — each stroke mean and yet savage,"[6] the implicit suggestion of the entire story becomes clear.

5 C.S. Lewis, Till We Have Faces (Boston: Mariner Books, 2012), 379, iBooks.
6 Ibid., 376.

Orual's nature becomes the nature of her complaint, and she finds her true face in the presence of mysterious divinity. Job voices a similar experience as he utters, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). Obtaining their true voice and showing their real face in complaint, Job and Orual establish that true human identity is found not in looking at themselves, but in experiencing the overpowering, unlimited nature of the divine. This nature that is beyond the bounds of earthly experience addresses human complaint by revealing and unmaking the genuine reality of humanity in the face of the greater reality of divinity, so that it is transformed. In this new state of being, Job and Orual understand their limits, and this allows them to glean what can be understood from the divine with immediate humility and eventual gladness. Job discovers this after the whirlwind, and Orual expresses this as she muses in her book. She writes, "The complaint was the answer…I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean?"[7] As one accepts the limits of human reasoning, the mystery of the divine remains, while its purpose is allowed to be appreciated. At first, Job and Orual accuse God of arbitrarily demanding something from them that they could not give. After their divine encounters, they reverse their initial contentions. Their conclusions suggest that God freely grants to humanity something they cannot earn. Both experiences establish that suffering reveals human deficiency and its need for God, unhindered by reason, to redirect complaint into answer.

While Orual emphasizes the unhindered divine answer to expressions of her misery, Lewis explores how the numinous affects Digory's quest in *The Magician's Nephew*. Orual realizes her limits at the end of her tale, but Lewis establishes Digory's helplessness early in the story. Polly finds Digory crying in his powerlessness to heal his beloved mother's mysterious illness. This inadvertently initiates their entry into other realms, where the cure can be found. Digory demonstrates the negative and positive aspects of human limitation during this quest. His ignorance leads to the release of the evil witch Jadis from her sleep,

7 Ibid., 381.

despite Polly's protests. Yet, Digory's shortcoming is repurposed into a mission to take an apple from a tree in his garden and plant it in Narnia. Driven by the need to atone for his earlier mistake, Digory overcomes the temptation to use the fruit for selfish reasons, despite the allurement of Jadis and his own desire. Digory's pathway from defilement to atonement is made possible in his *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* moment, when he encounters the lion Lewis chronicles as "so big and so bright that he could not take his eyes off it."[8]

Using the allegorical figure of Aslan the lion, Lewis suggests that the aspects of God's awesome wildness coexist with a mysterious closeness and sympathy to human frailty. This aspect of God compensates for human error, heals its consequences, and redirects human intent towards Himself in an invitation of healing and regeneration. It is the power connoted in the wild, dangerous imagery of Aslan as lion that suggests he is a creative force strong enough to overcome Digory's weakness. Digory and Polly could attest to this, after their multi-sensory experience of the terrible wonder of Aslan. Lewis writes in this manner concerning Aslan's creation song: "It made you want to run and jump and climb. It made you want to shout. It made you want to rush at other people and either hug them or fight them."[9] Lewis describes Aslan's eyes, which "stared at the animals as hard as if he was going to burn them up with his mere stare. . ."[10] showing he commanded their attention, even in their unenlightened state. This is reconciled with the power of his wild voice, which gives the animals the understanding of his instructions and purposes. This can be placed alongside Hebrews 12:25-29's invitation to receive the voice that shakes the earth and the heaven "with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." Lewis implies that this power and wildness is capable of consuming Narnia. Yet, the mention of the destructive nature of Jadis' Deplorable Word near the end of the story serves as a subtle comparison to Aslan's creation song, and affirms his life-giving nature. Thus, Lewis provides an illustration of the divine which is creatively benevolent, yet wrapped in an uncannily ferocious experience.

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8 C.S. Lewis, The Magician's Nephew (Australia: HarperCollins, 2010), 108, iBooks.
9 Ibid., 106.
10 Ibid., 110.

Similarly, it is the transcendent sympathy of the lion as Aslan that redirects the ruinous aspect of Digory's difficulties into his progression towards healing and regeneration. The lion who could sing the world beyond the ordinary into existence is unhindered by the understood realities of Digory's suffering. Interestingly, while Aslan is vastly beyond the power of suffering, he does not exclude himself from bearing the heaviness it brings to Digory's life. After confessing to his mistake of releasing Jadis, Digory desperately begs the wild lion to heal his mother and only looks downward, to Aslan's feet and claws. At this point, he instinctively knows himself to be unworthy, as he beholds the greatness of Aslan. The narrator briefly entertains the possibility that the lion is beyond sympathy. However, it is when Digory looks into the wild, untamable face of Aslan that he sees the deeper reality. Digory sees the tears bigger than his own, a grief deeper than this own, and an understanding beyond his. Aslan says, "My son, my son…I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another. But I have to think of hundreds of years in the life of Narnia."[11] In this pivotal moment, it is Aslan's knowledge of grief that establishes a connection with Digory, even while being over and above anything that Digory has ever experienced. It is in this connection that Aslan gives Digory a task rooted both in his shortcoming and his suffering. Digory is to retrieve the apple in order to plant the tree that will protect Narnia from Jadis.

When Digory realizes Aslan knows grief in a deeper way than he does, his sense of unworthiness changes into a sense of renewal. The boundaries established between the human and divine are traversed by divine initiative. Lewis writes, "the Lion drew a deep breath, stooped its head even lower and gave him a Lion's kiss. And at once Digory felt that new strength and courage had gone into him."[12] The Lion's kiss can be understood as the empowering reassurance that is offered only in the wild, terror-inducing stature of the divine. This ultimately enables Digory to succeed in his quest. Digory's earlier transgression is redirected into obedience. He is empowered to plant the new tree that will repel Jadis. Additionally, his affliction is redirected into healing, as Aslan grants him the fruit that will heal his mother. Digory's journey can be

11 Ibid., 136.
12 Ibid.

understood as a suggestion of how the divine answers the human fear of powerlessness, and also the concern that the all-powerful lacks interest in their trials. It establishes suffering as a portion of the larger story that God expresses through humanity, which features reverencing and embracing Him as unhindered, yet sympathetic, as He redirects suffering into regeneration.

Perhaps the story of God working through humanity tends to be obscured by the stories humanity develops in working their way toward what they desire. The invitation to worship God continuously contends with the ideologies of each age. These ways of thinking promise alternative ways of fulfillment or abandon satisfaction altogether. Lewis explores this tension in *The Pilgrim's Regress*. John's longing for the music and island of his youthful vision conflicts with his resentment towards the enigmatic Landlord who took his uncle away. This inner tug-of-war drives John's search to find his island, as he seeks it through the various ideologies of his era, but still fails to satisfy the longing. John's journey recalls the message of 1 Corinthians 2:6-7, which states "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification." Through allegory, Lewis insists that God satisfies our longing through His mysterious presence, purpose, and promise, which are beyond this world and time.

Throughout *The Pilgrim's Regress*, John seeks to find his island in human ways that progressively diminish him. The brown girl convinces John that she is what he really wants, and as he yields to her temptation, it saddles him with the guilt that drives him out of his hometown. John is convinced to seek worldly knowledge from Mr. Enlightenment and abstract artistic experience from the Halfways and the Clevers. This seemingly liberates him from the burden of having to contemplate the perplexing nature of the Landlord. However, the road that promises John's freedom from the Landlord leads to his imprisonment to the gigantic Spirit of the Age. The Lady Reason rescues John, but he finds she cannot answer his questions, because Reason can only take him so far. John reaches a wide canyon that no human can cross, yet Mother Kirk offers to help him. Even at this point, John is dedicated to finding

his own way, and doesn't take the help. After attending to the hollow philosophical lessons of Mr. Sensible, The Three Pale Men, and Mr. Broad, John finds himself in the Valley of Humiliation, where Wisdom tells him to abandon hope, but not desire. Wisdom summarizes John's journey to this point, saying "What does not satisfy when we find it, was not the thing we were desiring."[13] Every human avenue that John undertook toward satisfying his longing for the island rendered him further dissatisfied than before. This correlates with 1 Corinthians 2:12, which says, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God." Lewis signals that an encounter with the divine creates a longing which functions to lead humans beyond settling for the trappings of the world.

Lewis uses the allegorical figure of History to help John understand his *fascinans* experience with the divine provided in the vision of the island. History explains, "The Landlord sends pictures of many different kinds."[14] This creative depiction of John's island vision can be linked to the overwhelming expressiveness of God's revelation of Himself to humanity, whether through the avenues of Scripture, prayer, ecstatic visions, or worship experiences. Lewis illuminates the human inability to fully understand or express the experience of God with a lingering terror of His mystery, a reverential fear of His power, and a reluctant fascination with His nature. This is described in the continuation of History's aforementioned quote:

> What is universal is not the particular picture, but the arrival of some message, not perfectly intelligible, which wakes this desire and sets men longing for something East or West of the world; something possessed, if at all, only in the act of desiring it, and lost so quickly that the craving itself becomes craved; something that tends inevitably to be confused with common or even with vile satisfactions lying close to hand, yet which is able, if any man faithfully live through the dialectic of its successive births and deaths, to lead him at last where true joys are to be found.[15]

13 C.S. Lewis, The Pilgrim's Regress (Australia: HarperCollins, 2014), 297, iBooks.
14 Ibid., 372.
15 Ibid., 373.

Lewis suggests that humanity should seriously regard the persistence of longing, even despite the attainments of human satisfactions, in order to recognize the source of true fulfillment lies elsewhere. He insists that human longing is satisfied when one embraces the divine.

Lewis establishes this embrace when he depicts John letting himself go in various instances. First, John reaches the edge of the canyon, where he encounters the voice of Death. Perhaps as he comes to the edge of the canyon, he comes to the end of his ability. Faced with a decision to continue forward and be thrown into the canyon or surrender himself, John chooses surrender. As John loses his life to preserve it in a manner reminiscent of Luke 17:33, Death lets him go. Lewis implies that what John actually surrenders is his own will for his life, as he finally turns to accept the help of Mother Kirk.

Strikingly, as he responds to Mother Kirk's invitation to cross the river, he becomes afraid. The ghosts of his past arise to discourage him to return to their human ideologies. Through human and divine experience, John now realizes that these earthly enticements can't satisfy his longing. His co-traveller Vertue dives into the water first, but one more thing is necessary to enable John to take the plunge. Lewis writes, "how John managed it or what he felt I did not know, but he also rubbed his hands, shut his eyes, despaired, and let himself go."[16] Perhaps, the mysterious uncertainty of his island vision that caused John to wring his hands in anxiety. Possibly, the lingering terror of the inscrutable Landlord tempted John to close his eyes in one last attempt to forget, despairing in the acknowledgment of its reality. One can only speculate whether it was fascination that gave John the ability to let himself go. John's longing for the island was satisfied when he stopped searching in other avenues, came to the end of himself, and embraced the Landlord. In *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Lewis insists that human longing serves to lead toward the revelation of the tremendous mystery of Jesus Christ, in a world dominated by zeitgeists and ideologies that cannot satisfy.

Every C.S. Lewis character discussed in this essay embarks on a sojourn from the earthly to the numinous, in a way that recalls the journey

16 Ibid., 408.

from Mt. Sinai to the heavenly throne room. From Orual's complaint against Ungit, Digory's beholding of Aslan in the midst of suffering, and John's journey of longing leading toward the Landlord, Lewis presents the human condition interrupted by the experience of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans.* Each character is called to embrace the divine with the inevitable inadequacies of the genuine self, not with the polished presentation of the imagined self. Each aspect of Otto's numinous is necessary for the embrace to occur. *Mysterium* presents the unlimited transcendence of the divine so that Orual understands her limitations and self-deceptions. *Tremendum* impresses two understandings upon Digory through one image, as the Lion who creates worlds and overcomes suffering is also one who suffers and can be trusted by those afflicted by hardships. *Fascinans* leads John toward the promise of fulfillment, as the overarching concept of the Landlord repels John, yet the picture and music of the island sent by the Landlord propelled John's quest. Through these characters, Lewis provides clarity in considering how the tremendous, fascinating mystery of God reshapes and redirects the lives of the believers who behold the face of Jesus.

The Christian embrace of God is captured in 2 Corinthians 4:5-6. The Apostle Paul writes, "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." God is seen in Jesus Christ, who is God. Still, the mystery of God remains, as He is totally beyond humanity. When Christians embrace the mystery of God, they present everything they genuinely are, including complaints, sufferings and longings, to Jesus Christ. In the blank wonder of beholding the light of God's mystery that shines out of darkness, believers begin to abandon the insufficient self-concept, and embrace the light of knowledge that is the nature of Jesus Christ. Thus, those who once complained that a distant God issues impossible demands are transformed into ones who are answered. They find that human reason cannot tame the surprisingly wild God who grants them the gift that they could not earn. Still, Christians who look into the face of Jesus Christ can experience a reverential terror. God is able to cause believers to tremble in the wake of his holiness and their contrasting unworthiness.

Here is where the recollection of what Christ accomplished on the Cross proves essentially encouraging, as it shows that God did not exclude Himself from the knowledge of suffering. In Christ, humans have the image of God and a kinsman who knows the humiliation, pain, and death of the Cross. For all of this, it is the necessarily untamed and ferocious power of God on display in Christ's perfect sacrifice and resurrection that simultaneously sympathizes with human suffering, overcomes it, and regenerates it into the new life of the new Creation. In answering complaints and healing suffering, those who behold the face of Christ find that He satisfies their longings by using it to redirect their lives away from the love of the world and towards His love. As God embraced humanity in the mystery of godliness, and "manifested in the flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16), He met human separation from Him in the Person of Jesus Christ. As C.S. Lewis demonstrates through the characters of Orual, Digory and John, when people come to the end of themselves, they are able to revere and appreciate the inscrutable, yet trustworthy nature of God, and embrace the divine.

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Churches and the Invisible Urban Poor

This essay views contemporary interactions between congregations and residents within low-income neighborhoods through the lens of novelist Ralph Ellison's classic 1952 work, *Invisible Man*, and especially its central concepts pertaining to the invisibility, dispossession, and intended or unintended betrayals of the poor. The parallels between the tragic cultural misconnections captured within Ellison's fictionalized mid-20th century Harlem and those captured in clergy and resident interviews drawn upon here from a 2003 study I conducted of churches and the urban poor in four U.S. cities beckon us toward more clear-sighted approaches to our socio-economic divisions and our prospects for building community across those divisions.

R. Drew Smith, PhD.

Professor of Urban Ministry
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"I *was* and yet I was invisible . . . I was and yet I was unseen."[17] Those were words uttered by Ralph Ellison's "invisible man," in his 1952 novel by that name depicting mid-20th century social blindnesses in America. The occasion for those remarks was a meeting between the book's protagonist and a group of revolution-oriented whites intent upon engineering a Harlem uprising with the protagonist acting as their surrogate. Skeptical of this group from the outset, the protagonist quickly realizes how profoundly disconnected the group's perceptions and proposals are from the social realities of his Harlem neighbors and himself. "Look at me! Look at *me*!" the protagonist said to the group. "Everywhere I've turned somebody has wanted to sacrifice me for my good—only they were the ones who benefited."[18]

Invisibility, in the sense of being present but unseen, was central to Ellison's novel as a condition of blackness and poverty. The linkages between those two factors and a rendering of social invisibility were strong when Ellison wrote this novel, and they remain strong today. As of 2013, 27 percent of African Americans, 23 percent of Hispanic Americans, and 10 percent of white Americans were living below the poverty line, which is calculated at $11,490 for an individual and $23,550 for a family of four. Since the mid-20th century, the urban poor have become increasingly concentrated and isolated in urban ghettos—largely out of sight and out of mind of mainstream America. They have lived mostly among themselves within these slum contexts, while persons possessing greater incomes and social resources have relocated from urban core neighborhoods to outer ring suburbs, accompanying a similar exodus of businesses and social organizations. Churches left as well, but even the many churches that remained in poor neighborhoods do not seem to see their impoverished neighbors—at least not in ways that engender true mutuality and relationship.

In many urban contexts today, there is a strong likelihood that people living alongside each other may have fewer overlapping social interests that translate into a broader sense of collective identity than may have been true in previous generations. Collective interests and identities are especially hard to come by in contexts characterized by severe

17 Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man. NY: Vintage International, 1995 (1952), 507
18 Ibid., 505.

poverty. In these kinds of contexts, it has been shown that persons tend to be less connected to neighborhood organizations, businesses, faith-based institutions, or other individuals within the immediate geographic setting.[19] Certainly, where there is little social connectivity or interaction between low-income residents and adjacent churches or community organizations, the prospects for meaningful relationships or mutual solidarity will also be low. Even where physical proximity exists, neighborhood residents and churches can remain oblivious to each other.

Ellison draws attention to this kind of obliviousness, but a point that gains far greater attention in Ellison's novel is that the poor were also invisible to those presumably allied with their struggle—the organizations and leadership sectors presumably aligned with and advocating on behalf of the poor. It is this distinction about the invisibility of the socially marginal to their presumed allies that has resonated most within my own research focusing on constructions of community among the contemporary urban poor. Within my research, the alliance I have explored has been between the urban poor and urban churches. A research project I initiated in the early-2000s investigated this dynamic in four cities—Camden, Denver, Hartford, and Indianapolis—making use of surveys and interviews of both low-income housing residents and pastors of churches adjacent to these housing complexes. Select resident leaders, church leaders, and community leaders were then brought together for a series of roundtable discussions.[20] The substance and spirit of these discussions were no less revealing of the disconnections between churches and the poor than was the meeting between the protagonist and revolutionists in Ellison's novel.

In another parallel to Ellison's novel, the springboard into a more socially critical discursive space was an encounter with the dispossession of eviction. In the Ellison novel, the protagonist witnesses the eviction of an elderly couple, instigates an uprising by neighbors assembled outside the couple's apartment, and is recruited into the revolutionist

19 See, for example, William Julius Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged: the Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987; Christopher Jencks and Paul Peterson, The Urban Underclass, Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1991; and R. Drew Smith, Beyond the Boundaries:Low-Income Residents, Faith-Based Organizations, and Neighborhood Coalition Building, Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003.

20 See, R. Drew Smith, Beyond the Boundaries, op cit.

group by members that were among the crowd—all of this quite unintended by the protagonist. The evictions animating my research dialogues resulted from a government program called HOPE VI. This federal Housing and Urban Development program was designed to reduce the geographic concentration of the poor in densely populated housing complexes by demolishing the complexes and relocating the residents to less impoverished geographic contexts. Many residents participating in our roundtables shared their personal or vicarious encounters with HOPE VI policies, as well as their disappointment over the failure of local clergy and community leaders to assist them in resisting this dispossession.

This form of dispossession was not the only matter bearing on presumptions of alliance, but it was one that pried open the discussions in Ellison's fictional venue and in my four-city study. These themes of dispossession and invisibility, in fact, provide a hermeneutic for *reading* social dynamics captured in the roundtable dialogues, and serve as well as a framework for interrogating assumptions about urban church solidarity with the poor. The dialogue is detailed below.

Voice and Visibility for the Dispossessed

Two years after conducting resident and clergy surveys in Camden, Denver, Hartford, and Indianapolis, I convened groups of residents, clergy, and community leaders from the neighborhoods in each of the four cities. In one of the cities, in the relatively short period since the surveys were conducted, the housing complex where they were conducted had been vacated and the residents relocated to points unknown. When I inquired with the local Housing Authority about the residents' whereabouts, I was told they could not reveal that information but, in any event, the residents were *in a better place.* They did indicate their willingness to contact a few select residents, and this resulted in six residents attending the roundtable, accompanied by an uninvited representative from the Housing Authority. Surprisingly, the residents spoke openly and candidly about a number of grievances, mainly about their relocation to unfamiliar and inconvenient residential contexts, and the failure of faith-based and community-based leaders to assist them in resisting this Housing Authority initiative.

At the beginning of the roundtable, residents were mostly silent. Clergy did most of the talking, generally conveying a tone of confidence about the fairly strong connections between their ministries and low-income, grassroots populations within the city. One clergyperson summarized the matter this way: "it's the really poor who don't have any voice or anybody to stand up for them, and churches have always taken the side of the poor and have been willing to unite and to stand up and to be a voice."

The tone of the conversation shifted dramatically, however, when a resident spoke up and revealed what was on the minds of most of the residents assembled at the table:

> I want to talk about the relocation and the demolition of where we lived. I lived in the housing complex here in this neighborhood, and I was a resident there for 25 years. We really hoped and prayed it wouldn't happen, and even though the politicians were telling us one thing, what they really wanted was to take that neighborhood away from the poor. They wanted to supposedly build it up, but it was not for us, it was for the rich and the well-to-do people. And they really didn't care what happened to us. And we were furious about it. No one stood up for us. No community leaders, no churches stood up and said why are you throwing poor people out in order to let rich people in.

Another resident at the table followed up on this comment:

> Some other people in this city decided they wanted that property, so they wanted it to fail. They wanted the people who had bought homes and lived across the street to get so tired of the drug dealing and the prostitution and the violence that they wouldn't stand up against having the housing complex torn down. Instead they would cheer it.

Several other residents joined the discussion:

> RESIDENT: "Our complex was a community at one time, we

> had 250 families there at one time. We want our community back and all the things that go along with it."
>
> RESIDENT: "Believe it or not, even most of the seniors wanted to stay. I mean yes, the shooting was going on, but they had lived there 25 and 30 years, they did not want to go"
>
> RESIDENT ADVOCATE: "Cultural genocide is what I think is taking place. And they're making lots of excuses to cause this genocide to take place. Some people lived there for over twenty-five years, and if they had cleaned up the crime many would have loved to have stayed there."

For the residents, the issue had to do with loss; it was about dispossession. They had lost things that were difficult to measure, things that were intangible, things like a place to call "home," things like a sense of community. Many evaluations of the HOPE VI program typically measure the program's impact by the extent to which it locates residents in neighborhoods or living situations that are less poor or less racially segregated than the places from which they were removed.[21] These kinds of empirical measurements, however, fail to capture the *sense* of loss, the affective dimensions that accompany being uprooted. The assumption may be that residents gain more than they lose in these situations, but that may well depend upon who's doing the calculating.

Ellison gives voice to this issue—first in the protagonist's speech to the crowd at the eviction and, later, in a reply to the speech by the revolutionist group's leader. Both the protagonist and his revolutionist colleague attempt to relativize the couple's loss, but with the protagonist doing so out of empathy with the couple's social evisceration:

> Dispossessed? . . . That's a good word, 'Dispossessed'! 'Dispossessed,' eighty-seven years and dispossessed of what? They ain't *got* nothing, they caint *get* nothing, they never *had* nothing. . . . So who's being dispossessed? Can it be us? These old

21 Susan J. Popkin, "The HOPE VI Program: What has Happened to the Residents?" in Where Are Poor People to Live? Transforming Public Housing Communities, edited by Larry Bennett et al. Armonk: NY: M.E. Sharpe Publishing, 2006; 73

> ones are out here in the snow, but we're here with them. Look at their stuff, not a pit to hiss in, nor a window to shout the news and us right with them.
>
> . . . Can't you feel the cold wind, can't you hear it asking, "What did you do with your heavy labor? What did you do? When you look at all you haven't got in eighty-seven years . . . "[22]

The revolutionist leader (in response to the protagonist's speech) diminishes the couple's loss, and not out of solidarity but out of a desire to confirm his ideas of social inevitability:

> "The old ones, they're agrarian types, you know. Being ground up by industrial conditions. Thrown on the dump heaps and cast aside. You pointed it out very well. 'Eighty-seven years and nothing to show for it,' . . . And you made an effective speech. But don't waste your emotions on individuals, they don't count.
>
> . . . They're dead, you see, because they're incapable of rising to the necessity of the historical situation."[23] (290-91)

For Ellison, and for the participants in our roundtables, *perception* was a central issue. When conscious of the socially marginal at all, what are the paradigms that influence our perceptions? Roundtable clergy, when confronted with residents' experiences of dispossession, attempted to place their perceptions in perspective:

> CLERGYPERSON: I have to say I had no idea what was going on. And, I think a lot of churches would have been more involved had they known what was going on, but I for one had no idea. I didn't hear from any of the other pastors. I don't know what other pastors knew about what was going on with that situation.
>
> CLERGYPERSON: How can we sit here and say that we do not know when every other day there is an article in the paper, and it's also on television.

22 Ellison, 279.
23 Ibid., 290-91.

This exchange grappled with consciousness in a way that makes the point about the invisibility of the poor—the poor were present but not seen; their dispossession took place in full view of the public (via news accounts), but some onlookers remained unconscious of the matters upon which they gazed.

Then there were those who were conscious of the occurrence of dispossession, but still quite unconscious of what it meant in terms of affect or prospects for the poor:

> CLERGYPERSON: How do we make an impact? We know what's happened in the past; we need to be looking to the present and the future. In the neighborhood we're talking about, we can forget about low-income housing. They're not going to reverse this thing and bring back low-income housing. So is there anything we can do to empower the future? For example, our church bought a six-plex in that neighborhood for $300,000; in less than two weeks it was worth $600,000, and now it's worth $1.3 million. Now do you want me to reverse that? I don't think so. We see what's happening, so let's get in on that rather than sitting back complacent and complaining about what they have done. If churches could go to banks and establish lines of credit as a group, we could fund some of these other things too. But as long as we keep talking low-income, we'll only be dealing at that level. So let's start talking high-income; we just want them to finance us. We'll buy the $300,000 homes. The issue is just how do we get it done?
>
> COMMUNITY LEADER: Yes, because down the street from the housing complex, there's a bank that's lending two over prime to an investor who is lending five over prime and charging three points to yuppies who go in to purchase the Section Eight housing in that high-poverty neighborhood. So we don't need to try to start re-educating the community, we need our kids to start going to business colleges, we need our kids majoring in economics. Because if we're smart enough, and we come together, then we can start establishing lines of credit and charging two over prime, and so forth.

> CLERGYPERSON: Yes, but that's still not going to help the residents that are being displaced from their complexes and homes, and it's not going to help residents reestablish their community.

> CLERGYPERSON: We can help by trying to place economic power back within those communities. America is a capitalistic system and we're not going to change that. We need to try to train low-income persons so that they can get the kind of jobs that help them compete.

The residents speak of their loss. The clergy and community leaders turn the conversation toward larger issues of power and economics. The residents' experiences of dispossession become aggregated, and abstracted, and their individual situations of loss are rendered invisible. There can be no solidarity with struggle when we can't comprehend the details. Solidarity requires sight. It's hard to embrace what we cannot see.

In the case of our roundtables, the struggles of the poor were brought into view because the roundtables provided them with a platform. Platforms for the poor are not easy to come by—at least not platforms where the audience is attentive, receptive, and ready to respond to the presentation. The first step, of course, is that an interaction is facilitated. One of the residents at the roundtables conveyed the difficulty of interacting with leaders even when reasonable efforts are made to do so:

> I've asked our legislators why we can't have some control over the prices that they're getting for these houses? I said to the legislators that we need some regulations that prevent them from pricing us out of the market. But they said, 'well we don't see you down at the legislature.' And I said to him, 'well I'm down here but you all are usually in session.'

Secondly, where interaction occurs, the poor must be able to transcend their customary assignment as *audience* for others and be granted voice on their own behalf. One of the residents outlined the kind of interaction with officials that is typical of their encounters with local leaders:

> When the Housing Authority recently had a public hearing about rebuilding mixed-income housing in the neighborhood, we got a letter announcing the meeting and the fact that some of the developers might be at the meeting. At the bottom of the letter, though, it said 'please do not ask a bunch of questions during this meeting.' So what this meeting was for was for us to sit there and listen to them, and make them look good.

We hear echoes of Ellison's protagonist here: "Look at me! Look at *me*! Everywhere I've turned somebody has wanted to sacrifice me for my good—only *they* were the ones who benefitted." The residents in our roundtables desired recognition and acknowledgement. They hoped to bring visibility and voice to their situation. Instead, it was if they were not really present at all—or were present only as props on other people's stages.

Our roundtables concluded at much the same place as Ellison's novel: painfully aware of what divides us, but convinced that the way forward is through a difficult process of engagement. At the end of Ellison's novel, the protagonist, having retreated underground from his unsettling encounters with the Harlem masses and the revolutionist group, decides that there is no alternative to living *above ground.* Above ground, one risks being perceived or, more likely, being misperceived. But however he may end up being perceived, the protagonist realizes that "even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play."[24] And what role does he play? And what role were our low-income residents asked to play? To make us see them.

The protagonist, reflecting on his encounter with the revolutionist leader presuming to champion the interest of Harlem, asked the question: "What kind of society can make him seem me?" [25] He had no answer; and I cannot say what will be required for contemporary *champions* of the poor to see them either. Ellison, in his day, and the sentries of our day, must simply narrate—and hope. Ellison voices this in his protagonist's last lines: "Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice, as it were, what else could I do? What else but try to tell you what was really happening when your eyes were looking through?"[26]

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24 Ibid, 581.
25 Ibid, 477.
26 Ibid, 581.

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Singing and Making Melody in Your Brains: Where the Science, Theology, and Ministry of Music Meet in the Church

A paper submitted to Jason Whitehead, PhD, for the PTS DMin seminar DM87: Science, Theology, and Ministry.

In this paper, the author presents an integrative approach to the science and theology of music for the church's ministry of singing. He begins by setting his work in a specific setting. Next, he explains his methodology for the study. Then, he discusses some basic physics of music and more extensive research in the cognition and neuroscience of music. Finally, he offers tangible ways of imagining the church implementing an integrated approach to the science, theology, and ministry of music.

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> "Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts . . . ." (Ephesians 5:18-19 NRSV)

The church has always sung and made melody. Some New Testament writings include hymns of the earliest Christians,[27] even if the tunes are lost to posterity. Continuing the tradition of Israel, the church composed new songs and melodies in light of God's ongoing work. On the one hand, it can be asserted that the Bible offers "little speculation as to the nature and purpose of music."[28] It may well be that biblical authors did not set out to explain the mechanics of music—at least, not in the biblical writings themselves. Absent that kind of speculation, though, their writings do reflect an understanding of the nature of music,[29] and reflect as well several purposes of music in their lives, including their life with God. Words alone and other activities (e.g., offerings) did not suffice. They recognized a quality in music that they could harness for their most sacred relationship.

In my tradition (the Churches of Christ), *a cappella* singing has been, for the most part, the exclusive form of making melody to the Lord. We love to sing—in theory at least, and often in practice. Like other traditions, our songs influence our thinking.[30] We do well, then, to think in turn about the lyrics we sing. But do we think about the tunes themselves and the influence they might have on us? Moreover, Ephesians 5:19 admonishes the church to sing and make melody "in your hearts." Thus we might stress the role of the *heart* in the church's music. However, modern science is revealing how involved our *brains* are in music. Like other people, the church is "singing and making melody" in our brains, as it were. What is more, the sciences of physics explain a great deal about the mechanics of music. In this paper, then, I offer an integrative approach to the science and theology of music for the church's ministry of singing.

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27 For example, Lk 1:46-55; Phil 2:6-11; Rev 4:8, 11.

28 Frank Burch Brown, "Music," in The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion, edited by John Corrigan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 203.

29 See the case of Saul and David in 1 Sam 16:14-23.

30 S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., "Hymns Are Theology," Theology Today 42, no. 1 (April 1985): 59-68; and Beth Bowers, "As the Church Worships, So She Believes," Leaven 17, no. 4 (2009): 184-88.

Methodology

While music is clearly less contentious than other science/theology issues (e.g., evolution), attention to methodology is still in order. In terms of "science," I have considered physics, cognition, neuroscience, anatomy, and physiology. When I use the word "theology," I generally include biblical reflections about God, the church's teachings about God, my personal experiences and thoughts, and insights from people outside of the church. As for the "ministry" in view in this project, my focus is on the church's singing: a pervasive but singular act on the one hand, and yet a complex act involving many people on the other: song leaders and congregations/groups, but also lyricists, tune artists, and song compilers.

Next, I consider the perspectives of science, theology, and ministry toward music. Physics takes an interest in understanding music at the physical level: physical mediums, vibrations, sound waves, temperature, air pressure, and other features. Cognition takes interest in the mental and emotional aspects of making and listening to music. Neuroscience studies brain activity in relation to music. And anatomy and physiology study the body as a whole and its total involvement in music. Theology will take interest in the ways music expresses peoples' life with God: the theology (or "spiritual ethos"[31]) that gives rise to theological music, the theological claims of song lyrics, and perhaps even theological claims implicit in the tune of the songs themselves.[32] Closely related to theological perspectives on music, ministry perspectives on music take interest in the regular use of music in the life of its people. In addition, though, ministry might even take interest in perceiving music as a tool of evangelizing others.

Clearly, the present paper cannot tease out, let alone exhaust, all the possibilities of relating the science, theology, and ministry perspectives of music. What it can do, though, is relate select perspectives in an exemplary way for other perspectives of future interest. It was important, first, to name each aspect of inquiry involved. I then presented the kinds

31 S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., "Lyrical Theology: Theology in Hymns," Theology Today 63, no. 1 (April 2006): 25-31.

32 Don E. Saliers, Music and Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 7, 28-31.

of perspectives offered by each field of inquiry. The next step, relating science and theology (and ministry), requires discernment. Ian Barbour famously presented four paradigms for relating science and religion: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration.[33] Barbour himself preferred integration.[34] As some of my language above (p. 1) betrayed, I too have chosen the integration paradigm for scientific, theological, and ministerial perspectives on music.

Integration first requires guarding the integrity, the perspective, and the limits of distinct disciplines.[35] This step alone, however, does not get us past Barbour's independence paradigm. The dialogue paradigm would get science, theology, and ministry talking to each other about music. But that is still shy of integration. Integration requires the distinct disciplines to interact with each other in ways that impact the other disciplines without violating them. Bonnie Miller-McLemore writes of such a method as a "critical revised correlational method."[36] She envisions science and theology in a relationship in which each discipline insists on the legitimacy of its perspective and knowledge, respects the legitimacy of the other, and yet also makes demands on the other and thereby influences it. The belief is that both science and theology are better because of the other, and therefore are deficient (and perhaps impoverished) without the other. In the case of music, I believe that science can enrich our theology and practice of singing, that science can invite us deeper into something we already care deeply about. In the pages to come, then, it will be my goal to integrate science, theology, and ministry in the case of music. Specifically, I will discuss scientific findings about the nature of music and about peoples' responses to it, in hopes to draw out insights about God and for the church's singing.

33 Ian G. Barbour, Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), esp. 77-105.
34 Ibid., 247-48.
35 Carrie Doehring, "Minding the Gap When Cognitive Neuroscience Is a Cognate Discipline in Pastoral Theology: Lessons from Neurotheology," Journal of Pastoral Theology 20, no. 2 (December 1, 2010): 94.
36 Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Cognitive Neuroscience and the Question of Theological Method," Journal of Pastoral Theology 20, no. 2 (December 1, 2010): 64-92 (esp. 66, 74).

Physics

Why is there music? Before considering this question, we might ask, *How* is there music?

Physics investigates the latter question.[37] Physics would teach us that music is a subset of sound. There is music because there is sound, and because we humans have the capacity to detect sound and make sound—a realization that involves us in anatomy and physiology in addition to physics. We humans can hear sounds and makes sounds: we cannot hear all sounds; nor can we make any sound we want; but our anatomy enables us to interact with our world in remarkable ways, to hear it and respond to it. This fact alone can elicit awe and wonder (as well as compassion for those who do not have these capacities).

We can hear and make sound. But what is sound? Physics teaches us that what we call "sound" is energy: vibrations of a system cause waves to travel through solids, liquids, and/or gases (including our air). In particular, sound waves are of such a character that the human ear can detect the waves, and the human brain can interpret the waves. This transfer of sound waves through the physical and chemical structures of the ear and brain is remarkable.[38]

Our world is full of sounds. Unlike other sounds, though, music is "smooth, regular, pleasant, and of definite pitch."[39] We judge some sounds smoother and more pleasant than others. We arrange such sounds in regular and definite ways to make "music." But when we return to the physics of it, music is sound waves. At this level, it sounds rather simple. And yet, the physics of music reveals increasingly complex dimensions of it. For example, sound waves of different frequencies can be blended, and when the "right" frequencies are combined, the differing sounds produce a "harmony." I can think of songs in my tradition where certain harmonies have elicited chills in me (discussed later) and given me a greater sense, not only of joy, but of God's own

37 Harvey E. White and Donald H. White, Physics and Music: The Science of Musical Sound (Philadelphia: Saunders College, 1980); and Alexander Wood and J. M. Bowsher, The Physics of Music (New York: Chapman and Hall, 1975).
38 Brain Facts (Washington, D.C.: Society for Neuroscience, 2006), 16-17.
39 Wood and Bowsher, Physics of Music, 1.

presence. This capacity of nature is noteworthy. How is it that the convergence of sound waves can lead me to draw conclusions about God? Why is it that we live in this kind of world? Why is it we find ourselves capable of detecting and making, not only basic sounds, or even language—remarkable in its own right—but capable of detecting and making simultaneous sounds of different frequencies that affect us in such profound ways? And why is it we find our brains and bodies recognizably influenced by certain musical sound waves but not others? In this interaction with physics, I find myself leaning into what Ian Barbour referred to as a "theology of nature."[40] Closer to our subject matter, Don Saliers wrote of a "theology of music."[41] By integrating physics and theology, I am asking what it is we might discover about God, given the nature of the world we inhabit, and the capacities for music it has.

Cognition and Neuroscience

In addition to physics, cognition and neuroscience open up possibilities for our theology and practice of singing. I have spent time reading journal articles about mental and emotional responses to music, as well as measurements of brain activity while listening to music. For example, Boso et al. discuss brain imaging studies that show music activating areas of the brain associated with emotion.[42] On the one hand, such studies reinforce the common knowledge that music and emotions are often closely linked. And, given the historic tendency to locate our emotions in our heart, we might take Paul's words, "singing and making melody in your hearts," to relate singing to our emotions. On the other hand, since science reveals that the brain (not the heart) is the central (though not only) organ of emotion, we might reimagine Paul's words to admonish "singing and making melody in your *brains*." The brain/emotion relation also reconfigures our tendency to conceptualize worship styles as "head worship" and "heart worship." "Head" worshipers cannot judge "heart" worshipers to be leaving their brains out of worship. Nor can "heart" worshipers judge "head" worshipers to

40 Barbour, Religion and Science, 98-105, 247-48.
41 Saliers, Music and Theology, 26.
42 Marianna Boso et al., "Neurophysiology and Neurobiology of the Musical Experience," Functional Neurology 21, no. 4 (October-December 2006): 187-91.

be emotionless. The distinction is not so simple. Science reminds us of the complexity of each person, and that stereotypes do not suffice.

There might also be implications here for how the church selects and sings its songs. The Churches of Christ have had a somewhat tenuous relationship with emotions. In a church body that has too often defined itself against others, emotions in worship have often been seen as inappropriate or misleading. Now, to be sure, our feelings can be fickle, and we hardly need to construct our view of God exclusively from fickle responses to life. But Churches of Christ have often imagined themselves to be "head" worshipers. And, in recent decades, those Churches of Christ that have become more emotive have tended to be regarded with some distance and suspicion by congregations who are uncomfortable with emotive worship. If emotions happen in the brain, though, then emotive worship is not brainless worship. Songs that elicit emotions are not brainless songs. Emotive song leaders and singers in the church are not brainless worshipers. Involving emotion in singing *is* involving the brain in singing.

In another experiment, Anne Blood and Robert Zatorre measured blood flow in the brains of trained musicians as each listened to a selection of music that reliably elicited emotional and other bodily responses (chills).[43] Among several interesting discoveries, they found that the chills usually happened at the same part of the selected song—a memory-based physiological response. In addition, they found that the brains of these subjects responded to their chill-inducing music in ways akin to brain responses of drug addicts to their drug of choice. Although caution is in order here, the researchers found this correlation profound: "This is quite remarkable, because music is neither strictly necessary for biological survival or reproduction, nor is it a pharmacological substance." They go on to observe: "The ability of music to induce such intense pleasure and its putative stimulation of endogenous reward systems suggest that, although music may not be imperative for survival of the human species, it may indeed be of significant benefit to our

43 Anne J. Blood and Robert J. Zatorre, "Intensely Pleasurable Responses to Music Correlate with Activity in Brain Regions Implicated in Reward and Emotion," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America 98, no. 20 (September 25, 2001): 11818-23.

mental and physical well-being."[44] So then, our species has not needed music to survive, but we have found it to be a uniquely satisfying part of our lives, one that may well influence our health.

This study might also teach us in the church that people are more likely to respond pleasurably to music with which they are familiar. Participating in song selection may also influence how congregational singers respond to their songs in worship. However, John Sloboda showed evidence of people responding with shivers to harmonies that were new to them, for which they were unprepared.[45] So there may well be a place for unfamiliar songs in church, but people may be more likely to welcome them if the songs succeed in eliciting pleasurable bodily responses. Indeed, Sloboda found correlations between the structure of songs (the physics, as it were) and whether the body responded pleasurably or not.[46] So then, the church might choose its unfamiliar songs carefully, with attention to the structure of the music. S. T. Kimbrough even suggested a correlation between the structure of the music the church chooses and the structure of the church's faith: "Quickly resolved chords often underscore an overdrawn, simplistic view of faith which allows little place for the soul-searching, introspective and inward-looking aspect of growth in faith."[47]

Blood and Zatorre's study might also teach the church that music training influences one's response to music. They studied trained musicians because of their research premise: "this population is more likely to experience strong emotional responses to music."[48] If they are right, and if the church welcomes emotional responses to music, then the church might consider training more of its people to sing. Education in music and singing may be more than frivolous mechanics, especially if the church considers God as the Creator of this world with its sound-wave capabilities. The study of music and singing may prepare the church to harness the best musical sound available in nature and direct it to nature's Maker, a gift to the Giver. Integrating science and theology

44 Ibid., 11823.
45 John A. Sloboda, "Music Structure and Emotional Response: Some Empirical Findings," Psychology of Music 19, no. 2 (October 1991): 114.
46 Ibid., 113-18.
47 Kimbrough, Jr., "Hymns Are Theology," 60.
48 Blood and Zatorre, 11818.

in this way takes the Churches of Christ further and deeper, in my view, than other reasons we have given for our singing: to fulfill a perceived command, or to retain what some think was the apostolic form of music. This integration is not designed to obsess the church with technique and shallow attitudes toward worship, nor is it to privilege those who are musically inclined or gifted, but rather to value the practice of singing more highly and to consider God worthy of our best singing.

Lastly, I want to consider the study that prompted this paper: Jaak Panksepp's 1995 study of chills in response to music.[49] He noted what we observed earlier: "the basic emotional systems of the brain are tuned to the auditory environment."[50] He also noted that familiarity and personal meaning influenced whether people responded to a song with chills.[51] Contrary to expectations, though, he found that his subjects experienced more chills in response to sad music than happy music.[52] In addition, when his subjects reported chills in response to unfamiliar music, they more often experienced chills from unfamiliar sad music than from unfamiliar happy music.[53] He also noted that females tended to respond more emotionally to songs than did males.[54]

While I already discussed the importance of familiar songs, I did not then stress the importance of personal meaning. Members of my local committee discussed the songs that hold personal meaning for them: "How Great Thou Art," "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus," "It Is Well with My Soul," "Just as I Am," "Holy, Holy, Holy," "When We All Get to Heaven," "Before the Throne of God Above," and others. Personal meanings included stories behind the lyrics, memories elicited by certain songs, the "power" of a given tune or lyrics, the reliable sensation of God's presence during certain songs, the reliable response of tears, memories of conversion, and others. If people respond to music that has meaning to them, then, as observed above, the church might do well to involve them in song selection, and, if desired, seize opportunities

49 Jaak Panksepp, "The Emotional Sources of 'Chills' Induced by Music," Music Perception 13, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 171-207.
50 Ibid., 172.
51 Ibid., 178-79, 182.
52 Ibid., 180, 187, 189.
53 Ibid., 195.
54 Ibid., 186-87, 189.

(oppor-*tune*-ities!) to share the personal meaning of songs with the congregation that sings them: "speaking *to one another* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph 5:19 NASB).

Finally, I would integrate what Panksepp discovered about chills and sad music. It has been my experience that the churches who welcome emotion in their songs tend to stress happy, upbeat emotions. Where is the sadness? Where is the lament? Where is the song that *is* and *remains* open-ended, with no resolution? Does the church have and use music that resonates with people when they are down? Is it possible for the church to welcome sad emotive music into its repertoire? What would happen if singers experienced chills in response to sad lyrics and haunting tunes? Is there space in the church's music for this dimension of life with God, or is the church a one-dimensional chorus of songs and singers who force dishonest happiness?

Conclusion

This study has stirred in me additional considerations: for example, the church partnering with "secular" directors and singers in creative ways, or Churches of Christ partnering with acoustic experts when designing their auditoriums, sanctuaries, or worship centers.

As a project, what I envision here is church leaders and members alike partnering to direct serious and sustained energies toward a robust, full-orbed theology and practice of singing. I envision a church moved by the nature of music into theological wonder and insight. I envision a church appreciative of its *a cappella* heritage. I envision a church teaching its people to sing, and sing well. I envision a church that gives attention to the structure of the music it sings. I envision a church selecting familiar songs and songs with personal meaning for people. I envision unfamiliar songs taking hold of people because of powerful movements and harmonies. I envision a church that sings and makes melodies in their brains, and that recognizes emotion as a dimension of brain-worship. In short, science is full of resources that can remind the church to care about what it sings, how it sings, how it is able to sing, and therefore why it sings.

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Reclaiming Covenantal Identity In A Divided Church: An Argument for Celebrating Communion Weekly

By reclaiming an understanding of covenantal identity that is formed and conceived in God's covenantal promise and enacted in the unifying work of Jesus Christ, the church would be able to handle conflict in a constructive manner because the threat of broken communion would no longer exist. Our American culture proclaims a different understanding of one's identity based on individualism. Thus, the church's understanding of Christian identity within God's covenant is in constant conflict with the culture. Therefore, I propose that the practice of weekly communion can serve to strengthen an understanding of one's identity and connection to the church based on God's divine act of establishing covenant, and thus offer a path to healing a divided church.

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I attended my first meeting of Heartland Presbytery after accepting a new call and transferring my membership, and I volunteered to serve on the Commission on Ministry (COM). I expected that addressing situations of congregational conflict would be part of the work the commission engaged in, but I was also hopeful that the commission would have the opportunity to engage with our congregations in processes of revitalization, church planting and renewal. To my great surprise, at the first meeting of the COM which I attended, the primary topic was to formulate a process to address congregations who had petitioned for dismissal from the Presbyterian Church (USA). This one topic came to dominate the majority of my ministry with the COM, and I felt completely unprepared for the task that was now before me.

Over the next two years, administrative commissions were formed to listen to the arguments of churches wishing to withdraw from the denomination, to educate dissenting sessions in the polity and theology of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and to engage in the discernment process regarding the future relationship of these churches and the Presbytery. This process was painful for all involved, and unproductive. At the end of my term on the COM, Heartland Presbytery was mired in the process of litigation with several churches in the civil courts; the majority of court proceedings now focused on property and financial matters. One additional church withdrew from the denomination by turning over all physical property and financial assets to the Presbytery, as the pastoral staff renounced the jurisdiction of the Presbytery, and proceeded to lead ninety percent of the congregation to join a non-denominational church across town. Heartland Presbytery was now visibly a presbytery in schism, and the seeds of dissension were taking root among other disgruntled congregations.

My experience on the COM left me with the belief that our churches and church members have lost an understanding of their covenantal identity. My thesis is that by reclaiming an understanding of covenantal identity that is formed and conceived in God's covenantal promise and enacted in the unifying work of Jesus Christ, the church would be able to handle conflict in a constructive manner because the threat of broken communion or separation would no longer exist. Our American culture proclaims a different understanding of one's identity based on

individualism. Thus, the church's understanding of Christian identity within God's covenant is in constant conflict with the culture, making the need to claim and proclaim our covenantal identity on a regular basis ever more important for the life of the church. Therefore, I propose that the practice of weekly communion can serve to strengthen an understanding of one's identity and connection to the church based on God's divine act of establishing covenant, and thus offer a path to healing a divided church.

To support my thesis, in the first section of this paper I will explore the competing narratives of identity as presented by the New Testament and by modernity within the context of mainline American churches. In the second section, I will expand the implications of salvation and explore its relationship to covenantal identity. In the third section, I will discuss how covenantal identity functions to inform the church about the kingdom of God; a kingdom that is here and is to come. In the fourth section, I propose a practice for reconciliation under the covenant around the communion table and its implications.

1. Conflicting Narratives of Identity: Church and Culture

God's divine and defining act of choosing to be in relationship with humankind (what we call covenant) is the act that gives form to and provides the basis of unity for the gathered church.[55] However, the unity that God's covenantal relationship requires is often distorted in the American church as the people of God seek to form their identity around the cultural norms of American life, rather than embracing the description of covenant life outlined in the New Testament as the basis of their identity.

When American culture shapes the narrative of covenantal identity, churches in America craft an identity for God's people based on individualized, privatized, and corporate claims on the gospel of Jesus Christ.[56] This perversion of the gospel comes to us as a product of the

55 Edwin Chr. van Driel, Church and Covenant: Theological Resources for Divided Denominations (Unpublished Manuscript), 2.
56 Daniel L. Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 251.

Enlightenment. Under the rubric of Enlightenment philosophy "the individual", "the self", was defined as autonomous and understood to be isolated from "the individual's" social context.[57] Of all the philosophical inventions attributed to Enlightenment thinkers, their understanding of "the individual" and "society" has significantly impacted the church and the way in which it interprets and proclaims the gospel.[58] By default then, Enlightenment philosophy, with its compartmentalization of one's self and the way one relates to others, has influenced the formation of covenantal identity in the church. Thus, the dominant ethic in American churches is to begin with one's self and from that starting point seek to understand God, the community of faith and one's place and responsibility therein. This theology of individualism has created a narrative and practice of independence.

One expression of this independent and individual theological orientation is the question that runs rampant and unqualified in many mainline American churches today: "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?"

I presented this question to a group within my congregation, and asked them how they interpreted such a question. The answers, although presented in different forms, all centered on affirming the importance of such a question because it speaks to one's maturity of, and personal responsibility for, faith. I disagree with the interpretation of the question expressed by the bible study class. In fact, I will argue that this question and those similar to it represent a danger to the church because they place the responsibility of establishing relationship on the individual and not on God, and they ignore the communal aspects of the Christian faith.

This narrative of individualism that has pervaded the American church has distorted the understanding Christians have of their covenantal relationship with God, and their identity formed on the basis of God's covenantal promise. By extolling the virtue of independence at the expense of interdependence, Christian faith has been relegated to the

57 Bryan Stone, Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 133.
58 Stone, Evangelism after Christendom, 132-133.

private sphere, and thus the self-sufficient or independent Christian has a view of the church as a voluntary organization; freely choosing to belong to a church that meets her or his needs and withdrawing from church membership when those needs are no longer being met or when disagreement arises.[59]

The confusion surrounding covenantal identity in mainline American churches is compounded by the influence of Enlightenment philosophy because of the Enlightenment's understanding of the individual self, but also in its understanding of of how the individual self relates to others. In its philosophical construct the Enlightenment defined "the self" as radically autonomous, and in doing so it needed also to propose a definition of society in which the independent self was to operate.[60] As a result, Enlightenment thinkers viewed society, social, or communal relationships, as a contract between a free individual who engaged with another or others in order to pursue her or his own self-interest.[61] This is the paradigm in which mainline American churches are seeking to proclaim the gospel and help Christians understand their identity within God's covenant, and it raises a fundamental concern: if individuals are autonomous and only require connection to others in order to pursue their own goals, then church in this model is a voluntary organization and thus has no teleological significance for Christian identity.[62] This would then imply that the church of modernity is only relevant because of the meaning that an individual applies to the church, and as such there is no collective understanding of unity, truth, or God, because all theology in this paradigm is subjective.

However, while modernity puts forth one narrative of the church and its understanding of covenantal identity, it is not the only narrative. The New Testament has proclaimed a very specific vision of what the church is to be, and such an understanding of the church has helped to provide form, direction, and identity to Christians.

The mystery is that through the free grace of God in Jesus Christ at work

59 Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, 249.
60 Stone, Evangelism after Christendom, 141-142.
61 Stone, Evangelism after Christendom, 141.
62 Stone, Evangelism after Christendom, 138, 141.

in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, God is breaking down all walls of separation and making "one new humanity" (Eph. 2:15)... The church is called to be the beginning of new human life in relationship, solidarity, and friendship beyond all privatism, classism, racism, and sexism.[63]

Modernity seeks to understands all things through the lens of "the self." Therefore, modernity's understanding of the church locates the responsibility for being the church in human action, and decisions are motivated by what one will achieve through relationship with the other. However, the New Testament's understanding of the church stands in stark contrast to that of modernity. If the church is to reclaim its covenantal identity in a culture hostile to communal interdependence, the church must boldly proclaim itself as called into being by divine action.[64] Christians do not create the community of faith known as the church, because both faith and the community created by faith are divine gifts from a loving God.[65]

As such, the starting point of any argument about the nature of humankind's covenantal relationship with God must be grounded in the New Testament's understanding of the unique bond between God and humankind, where God is the principle actor who establishes covenant and invites humankind to participate in and through Christ. Woven into the New Testament's proclamation of the God made known in Jesus Christ is the idea that from the beginning of time it was always God's intention to unite humanity in Jesus Christ.[66] The church is connected to God's covenant people, Israel, through Christ because God chose to form this relationship and through the work of the Spirit made Gentiles obedient to Christ.[67] Grafted into Christ by the Spirit, the church is connected to Israel, and through this connection God brings the church into covenant relationship.[68] It is therefore Christ's gathering work that ultimately unites all things. This is the foundation and power of the

63 Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, 251.
64 van Driel, Church and Covenant, 12.
65 Edwin Chr. van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation: An Argument, (Unpublished Manuscript), 1.
66 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 10-11.
67 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 4.
68 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 23.

church as proclaimed in the New Testament. Having a clear picture of the formative principles of the church is necessary for understanding covenantal identity. Only when the church understands itself as called into being by God, and united in Christ, can it authentically proclaim the God who called it into being, and minister to God's people who find themselves in a culture dominated by individualism and independence, attributes that are antithetical to the principles of covenantal relationship.

In such a context as this, the celebration of the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis is an act of ministry by virtue of its very frequency. Weekly communion becomes essential to the church as it counters the influence of the modern culture by providing Christians with a teaching moment in which an alternate view of life and relationships are presented in and by Christ. The community that gathers weekly at the Lord's table must also bring their troubles, different views of the church and opposing theologies, laying these aspects of their individuality on the Communion table to be refined in God's community.[69]

2. Beyond Reconciliation: Salvation and the Covenant

In the first section of this paper I presented a basic sketch of the cultural narrative of individualism that has influenced mainline American churches, and how that narrative is in conflict with the narrative of covenantal relationship as presented in the New Testament. In this second section, I will build on previous themes and advance my argument for the importance of reclaiming covenantal identity by exploring a wholistic approach to the topic of salvation.

Whether as a discussion topic that arises during a confirmation class or as a question asked by someone new to the church, the concept of salvation is often misunderstood. Our modern culture has often interpreted salvation as a private endeavor. Pastors in mainline American churches will sometimes hear members talk about the time they "invited Jesus into their hearts" or the day they "took Jesus as their personal Savior." (As if we creatures had such power over the

69 van Driel, The Household of God: Living as God's New People, 27-28.

Creator!) This privatized understanding of salvation limits the work of Christ simply to the act of reconciliation, and downplays the communal aspect of covenant relationship to the detriment of the church. If salvation is private or is contingent on the actions of an individual, then the communal element of the Christian faith is relegated to that of a pleasant extra or nice benefit, and the transformational power of God's claim on human life is lost. Thus, it becomes easy to view the church as ancillary to salvation, as a voluntary human institution, and to therefore base one's membership on mutual agreement.

Reclaiming the covenantal identity of the church will help rectify the misunderstood meaning of salvation and Christ's atoning work. The church can begin this reclaiming process by helping Christians expand their theological imaginations.[70] It is easy to conceive of salvation in personal and private terms. There are few moving parts; just the individual and God. The logic of private salvation is based in cause and effect; recite a certain prayer claiming Jesus as your Savior and the effect is received salvation, but the structure of covenant life is more complex and ultimately more fulfilling. While I fully believe that through Christ humankind receives atonement and reconciliation, I would argue that the atoning work of Christ reaches its fullness in the community of faith, the tangible expression of covenantal relationship, and it is therefore best defined eschatologically: the goal of covenantal community is divine friendship, and therefore covenantal community is marked by hospitality.[71]

The covenantal community is best characterized as an eschatological community.[72] The church of the New Testament understood Christ to be present with them because the resurrected and ascended Lord represented the inauguration of God's reign in their midst.[73] Thus, for the church of the New Testament the meaning of salvation is multi-layered and is defined by more that just God's forgiveness

70 Edwin Chr. van Driel, The Household of God: Rooted in the Future, (Unpublished Manuscript), 9.
71 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 27.
72 van Driel, The Household of God: Rooted in the Future, 1,10,12. See also; van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 12.
73 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 23-24.

of sin.[74] There are aspects of Christ's salvific work that have been completed, i.e., reconciliation, atonement, and these are crucial to understanding covenantal identity.[75] However, the essential element needed to understand salvation for the church of the New Testament, as exemplified in Ephesians, is the ongoing work of Christ; Christ is actively creating a new community and all who share in his death and resurrection through baptism are incorporated into this covenantal community that will usher in the kingdom.[76] With this theological orientation, the church of the New Testament understood the brokenness of the present world, but envisioned themselves being led into the future by Christ who was healing and mending as part of the formation of the new community.

Perhaps the failure of the modern culture to grasp the meaning of God's call to covenantal relationship is because the chief end of the covenant is not a transaction defined by benefits received; rather it based on God's desire to share life and experience friendship with humankind.[77] Relationship with God and within God's reign cannot be understood by applying the logic and values of modernity. Living in covenantal relationship with God transforms the character of our relationships and interactions in the present, because humankind is now living as inhabitants in God's kingdom. When the church talks of living in covenantal community and of being gathered into a covenant relationship with God in Christ, the church is outlining a pattern of life based on justice, abundance, freedom, and grace.[78] Therefore, salvation is more comprehensive than just defining one's status of being forgiven by God. Salvation for God's covenant people is communal. Salvation extends beyond reconciliation with God to inform the church of its role in reconciling families, positively influencing the sphere of public life through politics, attending to the wounds that threaten to divide churches, and ministering in a variety of other situations where unity and justice are being compromised.

Covenantal life proclaimed by the church and lived by Christians today is

74 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 15.
75 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 24.
76 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 24-25.
77 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 26-27.
78 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 14-15.

a foretaste of God's coming reign. Therefore, if the church is to proclaim a wholistic interpretation of salvation that goes beyond reconciliation with God; then to understand God's salvific actions in human history is to affirm from the beginning of time it was God's plan to unite all things in Christ because God desires friendship with humankind.[79] If one adheres to such a position then, as a mark of the new community in Christ, hospitality must be seen as an attribute of salvation in the covenantal community, because hospitality represents an avenue of ministry by which the church can witness to a pattern of life that expands the meaning of reconciliation.

But why hospitality? What is hospitality's significance to reclaiming covenantal identity and relationship? What I have observed over the tenure of my own ministry is that church leaders, ministers, and elders have abandoned the theological foundation of covenantal relationship and adapted instead an approach to ministry influenced by modernity, based on the secular business model.

Ministers and church leaders seduced by the modern consumer culture have crafted a new version of Christian community and covenantal relationship, and infused it with ideas about supply and demand, personal fulfillment, market share and promotional events. In so doing the church has been presented not as the body of Christ, but as the purveyor of religious goods and services. Programming has been emphasized over doctrine in the well-meaning, but misguided, attempt to reach a culture that does not seem to value the church as it once did.

If the covenantal identity of the church is to be reclaimed, then the topic of hospitality must be engaged theologically and with vigor. Hospitality can no longer be viewed as a task for the ushers or as a strategy for church growth. Christian hospitality must be understood and integrated into our lives as a spiritual practice; a way of life that is a tangible witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.[80] It will require church leaders and congregations to re-prioritize how they live as the people of God, united

79 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 27-28.
80 Christine D. Pohl, "Hospitality: Mysterious and Mundane," Reformed Review: A Theological Journal of Western Theological Seminary 57, no. 2 (Winter 2003-2004): 5, accessed January 31, 2015, http://www.westernsem.edu/files/8712/8172/7526/win0304vol57no2.pdf.

by the gathering work of Jesus Christ in covenantal relationship with God and each other.[81]

If we are to affirm that the church is an eschatological community, then the members of the church must live in such a way that reflects the hope they proclaim. It is my contention that the entry way into reclaiming covenantal identity through theologically based hospitality comes through the church's understanding and practice of the Lord's Supper. For the hospitable community of faith, the Lord's Supper is theological bedrock. In the drama of the Communion meal, a congregation remembers the eschatological welcome of the Triune God into covenantal relationship, acts out Christ's own welcome to us, and empowers each member of the community to extend a welcome of their own in Christ's name.[82] Imagine what might happen if Christians animated by a renewed understanding of their identity and motivated by Christ's own gracious welcome of them began to ask such transformative questions as: who is missing from our church? Who are the vulnerable people in our community? What shall we do about it?[83]

These questions of hospitality speak to the very core of covenantal identity, and therefore hold great significance for divided churches. If the answer to the above questions is: other Christians who do not believe or act as we do, then the faith community asking the questions must confront its own hypocrisy. If the nature of God, as revealed in scripture and proclaimed by the church, is to unite, heal, and transform those whom God has chosen to be in relationship with, then church members have no grounds to exclude others or cause schisms. Celebrating communion on a weekly basis will keep these questions constantly before congregations in ways that proclaim unity in Christ and the love of God.

The proclamation of salvation that extends to the far corners of life heralds good news, not just for the healing and transformation God brings to our personal relationships and faith formation, but because

81 Pohl, "Hospitality: Mysterious and Mundane," 5.
82 Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, 289-295.
83 Pohl, "Hospitality: Mysterious and Mundane," 8.

God's comprehensive reconciliation also entails a political dimension.[84] Those who made up the church of the New Testament lived under a burdensome tax structure, took out high cost loans to maintain family and home, and were exhausted by constant cycles of war.[85] I would argue that little has changed for the church today. Those who constitute the church in America today face similar burdens: a complex and oppressive tax code, predatory lending in the form of sub-prime home and auto loans, and seemingly endless cycles of military action in the Middle East. The coming of God's kingdom is good news precisely because it is political and it represents freedom on two levels. The first level of freedom is eschatological; when God's kingdom is fully established it means an end to all oppressive political systems. The second level of freedom is experienced in the here and now, because God's kingdom is already a reality that is taking form through the gathering work of the resurrected and ascended Christ. Christians experience the freedom to work in our world now in order to make it more like God's coming kingdom. Of the many theological levels on which it functions, the celebration of the Lord's Supper serves as a charge to the community to go into the world and work for change and healing, both in our churches and in our society.

3. A Covenantal Community Lives Into the Kingdom

In the second section of the paper I argued that salvation has a variety of dimensions and is comprised of more than just God's forgiveness of sin. In this third section, I will present a vision of the kingdom through the lens of the beatitudes from the gospel of Matthew. My contention is that being able to envision the kingdom is essential to reclaiming covenantal identity and controlling one's pride; all of which leads to the proper orientation that one needs to follow Christ's calling and promote healing in divided churches.

The church as the tangible witness of people living in covenantal relationship with God is a unique kind of community. That uniqueness comes from the fact that the church is a community which has been established by the eschatological gathering work of Christ, and this

84 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 16-17.
85 van Driel, Outside the (United) Church is No Salvation, 17.

community finds its form and purpose in the future kingdom of God that has already taken root in human history through the resurrected and ascended Christ.[86] If the church holds to this eschatological view of itself, then in seeking to understand its covenantal identity in relation to God's kingdom that has been established and is moving toward full consummation, the church and its members will undoubtedly ask: what does the kingdom look like?

Of the many examples of God's kingdom in the New Testament, I will argue that the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew's gospel provide the church with a comprehensive image of God's kingdom:[87]

> Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. [Matthew 5:2-12]

86 van Driel, The Household of God: Rooted in the Future, 10.

87 The gospel of Matthew is also significant for my argument because of the gospel author's Christology. The narrative of Mathew's gospel is crafted to present the person and ministry of Jesus as a parallel to the figure of Moses. My contention is that such a connection is important for the church in understanding its covenantal identity, because it is yet another example in the New Testament of the church imbedded in Israel. For a more detailed treatment of this idea see; M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in New Testament Articles, Matthew, Mark, vol. 8, The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 175.

Jesus' teaching here in Matthew's gospel is not advice for successful church programming; it is a series of prophetic and eschatological ethical imperatives grounded in a twofold understanding of God's kingdom: God's kingdom is a present reality and is yet to come in its complete form.[88] My contention is that the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount call the church to a deeper understanding of covenantal relationship, and to explore the dimensions of God's kingdom, and that these precepts can offer guidance on healing and unity in the church today. The beatitudes express this guidance for healing and unity by establishing the formation of the covenantal community and basing their authority on the one who proclaims the blessings.[89]

In the formation of the covenantal community, the community is called to be creative as it lives into the present and coming reality of God's kingdom. The beatitudes in Matthew's gospel both describe something that already is, and seek to bring into being what they proclaim in the here and now.[90] As such, the beatitudes describe the orientation of the covenantal community. However, they do not list how specific practices are to be carried out. The beatitudes are not prescribed practices which are necessary to enter covenantal relationship with God, rather they are a declaration about how the covenantal community will engage the world because of who the members of this community understand themselves to be in Jesus Christ.[91] Thus, the community has been blessed with a freedom to respond to God, to live the ideals of the kingdom in community, and to do it in such a way that represents the needs of the environment in which a particular church finds itself. There is not only one way to be a peacemaker, rather the church witnesses to the present and coming reality of God's kingdom as it works for peace in a way that is meaningful to its specific ministerial context and faithfulness to God. The covenantal community is blessed because it has been gathered and incorporated by and in Jesus Christ. Because God has laid

88 M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in New Testament Articles, Matthew, Mark, vol. 8, The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),177.

89 Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 177.

90 Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 177.

91 Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 177-178.

claim on the life of the community, these blessings illicit a response and as such the blessing becomes reality.[92] Thus, the covenantal community begins to take shape as the members, who are knit together in Christ, understand themselves as blessed and respond accordingly. Their actions do not constitute their covenantal identity; covenantal identity is constituted solely in Christ. Rather, the actions of the community witness to Christ's gathering and healing work, and from this perspective the covenantal community is formed.

It must also be noted that the church God is calling us to be is much different than the church were are today, as evidenced by not only by the plethora of denominations, but the constant schisms within the cornucopia of Christian denominations. The theological imperative of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount can offer healing and unity to the church by providing the church with an understanding of who called it into being and why. This is significant because, in theory, such a theological framework would compel Christian denominations to order themselves according to the precepts of God's kingdom and not by sociological categories; in fact the church may begin to see its many incarnations of the body of Christ (denominations) as contrary to God's covenantal claim.[93]

4. The Lord's Supper and Covenantal Identity

Does it make any difference what understanding we have of the Lord's Supper as long as we participate in the sacramental ministry of the church?[94] Is the Lord's Supper really important for our every day life and practice of faith?[95] I would argue that the answer to both of the above questions is an unequivocal yes. This is because the answer to each of the above questions is determined by one's understanding of Christology. Therefore, how one answers these questions will also impact how one thinks about and participates in the church, and will also determine what it means for that person to live in covenantal relationship with God and others. In this section of the paper, I will argue in more detail that

92 Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 177.
93 van Driel, Church and Covenant, 15.
94 Daniel L. Migliore, The Power of God and the gods of Power, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 94.
95 Migliore, The Power of God and the gods of Power, 94-95.

the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper is essential to the the church for two reasons: first, that in the weekly celebration of Communion the church reaffirms its covenantal identity in Christ; second, this practice offers a path for the reconciliation and healing of a divided church.

If churches, especially those in schism, are going to mature in faith and find healing through the practice of weekly communion, then our sacramental imaginations must be stretched to think of the communion meal in terms of eschatological abundance.[96] Too often in mainline American churches the communion celebration lacks any characteristic that would indicate to an outsider witnessing it that this practice is celebratory in nature, and proclaims a present and future hope in Christ's gathering work. Although there is scriptural justification for, and indeed pastoral teaching that can occur from, a communion service that is somber in nature and centered on remembering Christ's sacrificial work, I fear that the church has extolled this aspect of sacramental theology to the detriment of the communion meal's eschatological significance.[97] Even though my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), is rooted in the Reformed tradition, it could be argued that our theology of the Lord's Supper adheres to a memorialist doctrine, at least in the way it is being experienced in our churches.

The danger of adhering to, or being perceived as, a church with a memorialist doctrine of the Lord's Supper is that the church loses its moral authority in the proclamation of the gospel. If the Lord's Supper is understood to be a simple reminder of Christ's salvific work, then the church has transformed this sacrament which gathers the community of faith in the real presence of Christ, makes the church participants in the kingdom now, and proclaims the coming reality of God's reign in the consummation of all things, and turned it into a mere oath of loyalty.[98] If the Lord's Supper were akin to the American pledge of allegiance, then the church would not have the moral authority to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom and all that God's coming kingdom implies. The church only has authority because of the real presence of Christ and his ongoing work of gathering and uniting humankind. Although remembrance is

96 van Driel, The Household of God: Living as God's New People, 25.
97 van Driel, The Household of God: Living as God's New People, 24.
98 Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, 288-291.

an important aspect of the Lord's Supper it is not life-giving, and therefore the church must always implore God's people to look toward the future, to imagine God's kingdom, and to realize that the kingdom has in fact entered our present world in the person of Jesus Christ.[99]

If the church truly believes that the Lord's Supper proclaims the eschatological transformation of humanity, the abolishment of sin and human resistance to God's ways, then how are our relationships affected in the present time?[100] I now offer the following implication of this belief as reflected in the celebration of communion on a weekly basis:

Our relationships with others will be defined by forgiveness. The weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper serves as a consistent reminder that Christians are a people marked by God's forgiveness (Matthew 26:28), and thus participation in weekly communion renews one's covenantal identity.[101] This is crucial for the state of the church today as it is easy to get caught up in theological debate and allow our different theological positions to create a chasm between fellow Christians, even those who claim to be of the same denominational affiliation. This chasm is created by the establishment of what I will call the "litmus test for Christian unity." In stating a theological position, one side claims "x" is true and the other side claims "y" is true. This is, of course, the nature of theological debate and it is useful until the side that proclaims "x" says that if you believe "y" then our unity in Christ is broken and we must go our separate ways. In doing so, each side stakes their identity and union on one particular theological claim and ignores who God has declared them to be and forgiven in Jesus Christ.

The church celebrates the Lord's Supper as a people who have been forgiven and reconciled to God and each other in Christ. This is not a

99 van Driel, The Household of God: Living as God's New People, 26.

100 van Driel, The Household of God: Living as God's New People, 25. Cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34

101 The connection of forgiveness in relation to covenantal identity that I am highlighting is derived from the way the term "forgiveness" functions in the gospel of Matthew. In Matthew forgiveness comes via sacrifice, Jesus's death, and it is the sacrifice that unites God and the covenant people. Matthew supports this claim by reframing Exodus 24:3-8 and asserting that Jesus' blood is the sacrificial element that not only fulfills but supersedes the old covenant. See; Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 471-472.

passive affirmation or practice. If taken seriously, the activity that takes place at the communion table will be carried out into the community. Our relationships will therefore have to be defined by acts of forgiveness, community building, and the sharing of life together. This relates to the example stated above in the following way: there will always be a diversity of opinions within the body of Christ, but as God's eschatological work begins at the communion table, as the new humanity is being form in Christ even now, Christians find a comfort living together even in disagreement, because agreement or disagreement has nothing to do with unity. Christ is the only unifying factor.

More importantly, Christians can forgive those who have broken the unity of Christ's church through dissension by welcoming them back into their former union, or at the very least being ready to do so. Through the offering of weekly Communion the Lord's Supper regains its central place in the American mainline church, reaffirms our identity as God's people, and we learn to forgive and value each other as God has us. These benefits and others help the church move forward in harmony into God's future.

5. Conclusion

Celebrating the Lord's Supper weekly in the church is a means by which the church can reclaim covenantal identity and show the community of faith a way to live into God's future together. In this paper I presented four arguments to support this claim.

The first argument explored the conflict surrounding identity formation for Christians as they receive conflicting messages from the modern culture and the New Testament as to how to understand their relationship to God and the implications therein. My argument centered on the influence of Enlightenment philosophy that has pervaded American culture in a variety of ways, resulting in American Christians attempting to interpret covenantal relationship through the lens of individualism and independence. It is not difficult to demonstrate that the New Testament presents a completely opposite understanding of one's identity and approach to God. From the New Testament perspective, it is God who has called the church into being and united all things in Christ, thus demol-

ishing all independent and unjust avenues of faith and calling humankind to see their place united together in bonds of fellowship with God and each other. Weekly communion here is essential because the theology of the Communion celebration combats the influences of modernity in the lives of church members.

In the second section, I argued for an understanding of salvation that transcends reconciliation alone. Atonement and reconciliation are certainly part of Christ's salvific work, however, Christ's salvific work reaches its most profound meaning when the community of faith lives together in such a way as to represent the unity and healing that Christ brings. The community of faith, living into covenantal identity, is marked by actions of grace, compassion, and justice which I link together under the term hospitality. The community of faith is able to be hospitable because it understands identity in God's covenant and its orientation as an eschatological community; the church waits with hope for the consummation of all things in God's kingdom which the risen and ascended Lord has already begun to establish within the covenantal community. The weekly celebration of Communion functions as a charge to the church to go out into the world and live the reality of God's kingdom.

In the third section of the paper I sketched a vision of the kingdom using the beatitudes from Matthew's gospel. I argued that being able to envision the kingdom is an essential aspect of reclaiming covenantal identity and promoting healing in divided churches. At the Communion table, the church is inspired to be creative as it helps enact the kingdom in our world.

In the final section of the paper, I argued the benefits and ministry of the weekly celebration of Communion in greater detail. The principle component of the premise is this: if the Lord's Supper is truly a formative and nurturing experience for the church, then how are our relationships affected by our participation at Christ's table? The Lord's Supper is a point of connection between the gathered church and God. As the church celebrates at the table, the bonds of love and fellowship are forged and strengthened not just between God and individual Christians, but between all who make up the community of faith. The church's celebration at the table is a witness to what the church looks like and how the church acts as it is gathered into Christ and united in God's all encompassing love.

Collectively, these four arguments demonstrate that at the table of the risen and ascended Lord, the people of God witness God's forgiveness and are subsequently called to embody forgiveness in their own lives. At the table, the church is reminded that God is at work in our world and that our future hope is found in the coming kingdom. At the table, the church purges itself of the labels and identity it has been given and burdened with by the modern culture. At the table, the church is claimed by God and thus begins to understand its true identity as it is formed in Christ. At the table, the church is nurtured by the real presence of Christ and finds its place and strength in God alone.

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SERMONS

Pittsburgh
Theological
Journal

SPRING 2015

Even Now

This is a sermon written for an ecumenical Ash Wednesday service in February 18th, 2015, at Verona Presbyterian Church. The scripture for the sermon is Joel 2:1-2, 10-17, along with a poem “This One is Mine” by Hafiz.

Rebecca Dix

Rebecca Dix is a storyteller and wordsmith who is in her third and final year of the M.Div. program.

"This One is Mine" by Hafiz

Someone put
You on a slave block
And the unreal bought
You

Now I keep coming to your owner
Saying,
'This one is mine.'
You often overhear us talking
And this can make your heart leap
With excitement.

Don't worry,
I will not let sadness
Possess you.
I will gladly borrow all the gold
I need

To get you
Back."

When I was little I was afraid of the dark. Frequently the T.V. would just be on at my grandparent's house, sometimes for content but mostly to cut through the eerie silence of the Midwestern countryside, and one time there was a dateline special on the Brazilian Goat Eater, also known as Le'Cuchacabra. My sweet, caring grandparents were unaware that their young grandchild was in raptured by this show and fed a fear that festered for years. I was convinced for many years that there were monsters in the dark waiting for me.

Now I've grown up. It has been many years, over twenty, since that pivotal night at my grandparents, but I am still nervous to walk home alone at night or walk through any space dampened by shadows. Not because I believe the Brazilian goat eater is waiting for me or because of the darkness itself. I look over my shoulder and mark footsteps and check my surrounding area because I fear the darkness that lingers

in people's hearts. The thing about growing up is you don't actually outgrow fear, your fears grow up too, and my fears as a woman who once was a girl who was afraid of the dark have grown up too – my monsters have simply changed.

We all have an understanding of some form of darkness – it comes in many shapes and sizes. There are parts about being human that are ugly, dark, and terrifying. The world has not hesitated to let us know. Violence parades in our cities and throws itself its own surprise birthday parties. The weight of depression and loneliness press down upon us and sew aching into our bones. A gauntlet of fears and hatreds haunt us and the apparitions of our regrets cling to our footsteps. The mistakes of our forbearers sometimes become ours to own with a mortgage we can't afford.

What is most terrifying isn't the darkness outside in the world but the parts we see in ourselves. The parts where sin has taken hold of us. All of us have part saturated in this kind of darkness. (Except perhaps my mother, and I am sure each of your mothers or fathers may be exceptions as well.)

But we all have something that lingers in our hearts. The poem read earlier names it - "Someone put you on the slave block and the unreal bought you." Our reading from the book of Joel talks about darkness too: In verses 1 through 2 it says, "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near – a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old nor will be again after them in ages to come…" Continuing in verse 10, "The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining."

The darkness here is a bit different. The prophet Joel is talking about the impeding judgment of God upon the inhabitants of the earth who turned away from the loving lordship of God. As the children of God they were called to live faithfully, trusting in the Lord as their God and King. But they didn't, and the sins they committed were not simply

against their neighbors but flew in the face of the covenant with God. There is evil in this world, yes, but there is also the pain and suffering that is on our hands, and if we stopped at verse 11 with the question of "Truly the day of the Lord is Great; terrible indeed – who can endure it?", the answer is not one that should sit comfortably with us. It's not one we want to invite over for afternoon tea or give the spare bedroom. If we were to stop there in our reading, it does not sound very good. At all. For the people of Israel and for us.

Fortunately, it doesn't stop there at verse 11. There is a verse 12, which goes on to say "Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing." Verse 13 goes on to say, "Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing." The word that is translated for the "yet " in *yet even now*, can also be translated as "but" – "But even now" and I think, personally, it would be a much stronger translation.

But even now – after all of this, after all that we have done, after all the blood we have sown into the ground and the harvests we have reaped and the fruits we have consumed– even now, someone has already claimed you. Even today, in our situation, in our sin pocked world, someone has already paid the ransom for you, paying a much higher and more precious price than gold, making a declaration to the darkness, to all the burdens that keep us bound, that "This one is mine." In whatever shadow cast corner we find ourselves, even there God can work transformation.

Remember the line from the poem earlier, "Now I keep coming to your owner saying, This one is mine."

Even now.

Lent is a time of penitence and contrition. Perhaps some of us have fasted today in preparation. Perhaps many of us have already planned to give something up in honor of this time of sorrowful reflection, seeking to create in ourselves more space for God to be at work. But

even so, there is nothing we can do that can persuade or convince God to spare us, for God has already staked a claim on us. We are His.

So that begs the question, if there is nothing we can do, if the claim has already been made, then why do we need this time? Why focus on repenting if it doesn't DO anything for us?

It is BECAUSE we are already claimed in and by the precious blood of Christ we then are reassured that we can come before the Lord in confession with contrite hearts. BECAUSE God has declared "This one is mine", we can return from our turning away from God's lordship in our lives.

Even now.

Even with the parts of us that are broken and charred.

Even as we feel kept in bondage by sin or trapped in any manner.

Even now.

For God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

So our actions, our fasting, our weeping, our mourning, are not to be signs for our own edification or to prove something to our neighbors, but marks that we have been made new, that your hearts, the source of judgment and faith, have been rent and we are placing your trust in the faithfulness of God and God alone. We are no longer putting our trust in princes, in mortals who cannot save. When their spirits depart, they return to the earth. When they die, their plans come to nothing.

In the service there will be an opportunity for all to receive the ashes. This is a mark of our mortality, for we are mortal. From dust we were made and to dust we shall return. Our mortality is not a prison, for since our hope is in Christ who is God eternal, we have freedom. And we can return to the dust it is our God who reigns.

But in whatever way you set apart this season of Lent, I pray that you do so that your hearts experience the transformative work of God and trust in God's abounding covenantal love. And do so remembering that God has done and will continue to be at work to get us back, no matter how seeped we are in sin, no matter how far we venture, for we are His, the Light whom no darkness can overcome.

Even now.

You Told the Story Wrong, Jesus

This sermon was prepared for the Preaching the Parables course, Fall, 2014. It was subsequently preached in the Longwood at Oakmont Seniorcare Community. The sermon text is Mark 12: 1-11.

Susan A. Blank

Susan A. Blank is a Senior Master of Divinity student, and a candidate for ministry in the PC(USA).

Michael was a teenager we knew from Boy Scouts. My husband worked with Michael on a merit badge where Michael had to write up a resume which he would theoretically use to apply for a job. In his resume, Michael emphasized his ability to work hard, and his skills at weed-whacking and yard work. By the time my husband had approved the completion of this merit badge, he had hired Michael to spend Saturdays working in our fields and yard. Michael was classified by the school as a slow learner. But, he was a hard worker, fixing fences and clearing brush. He was good at it. And Michael was also good at telling jokes, stories as he called them, long involved stories that ended in a punch line. At mid-day, I would provide lunch, and as I set out the sandwiches and potato salad, Michael would tell me a joke. One week I had to ask Michael to repeat the joke from the previous Saturday, because I had tried to tell it to someone, and had thoroughly messed up. When Michael caught on that I was not as skilled at story telling as he was, it became his mission to teach me story telling. One week he would tell me a story, and the next week, I had to tell it back to Michael. Inevitably, I would mess up. I would mix up the antagonist with the protagonist. I would forget just what three persons had walked into a bar. But most often, I would commit the great sin of giving away the punchline too early. Michael would squeal with delight, "You messed up. You told the story wrong." Michael was a skilled storyteller, but I keep telling stories wrong.

Jesus was known to use storytelling in his teaching. I think Jesus, even today, would be seen as a skilled storyteller. His parables are still being told. They have been the subject of volumes of commentary. On many Sundays, somewhere, someone is repeating one of the stories that Jesus told. But did Jesus always get it right? Did Jesus ever mess up? "Hey Jesus, you're telling the story wrong. It wasn't a fig tree, it was an olive tree." "There weren't twelve bridesmaids, there were only six, and they were tardy because they couldn't find their shoes." "It wasn't a sheep who was lost, Jesus, it was that idiot shepherd, Zelophehad." It's hard to imagine that Jesus messed up, because we *know* these stories. We have made *sense* of these stories. But was there a time when the people of Palestine shook their collective heads and said, "You messed up. You're telling the story wrong Jesus?" Was there?

One day the priests, the scribes and the elders came to Jesus and said "By what authority are you doing these things?" Then he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, and dug a pit for a winepress. He put a fence all around the vineyard, and in the middle he put a watchtower, overlooking the hills in every direction." Ah, the people begin to nod. "We *know* this story. It was told by the prophet Isaiah. 'My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it.' Yes, we know this story. It's one of our favorites. Isaiah says that the landowner is the Lord, and the vineyard is our ancestors, the house of Israel. We know *this* story. Jesus continues: "The man leased the vineyard to tenants and went away to another country. When the harvest time came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect his share of the fruit of the harvest. But they seized him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed." Now you hear the murmuring of the crowd. "That's not how the story goes. Jesus messed up. He's telling the story wrong! Where is the part about the wild grapes?" But Jesus plows on. "And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. Then he sent another and that one they killed." The crowd is stirred. Something is wrong here. This is not how the story goes. Does Jesus not know his scriptures? "Jesus, were you asleep in school? Where is the part about judging the vineyard? Where is the part about removing the fence, and breaking down the wall? What book were *you* reading, Jesus?" But the storyteller seems to be getting the reaction he wants. The crowd is interested. They lean in closer, hanging on every word. What will this teacher claim next? Jesus goes on. "The landowners sent many others, one after another. Some the tenants beat; others they killed. He had still one other, a *beloved* son." Oh no. He's not going *there*, is he? How dumb can you get? What kind of landowner is that? You plant a vineyard. You build a watchtower to protect it. But your servants have been killed. And now you're going to send your only son? This is so embarrassing. The landowner is supposed to be God; but this landowner sounds like he's not playing with a full deck! That's *not* how we've heard this story in the temple. "Jesus, you're telling the story all wrong!" Undeterred in his mission, Jesus keeps moving forward. "This *beloved* son he sent to them, saying 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This then is the heir; come let us kill

him and the inheritance will be ours. So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do?" Jesus asks the question, but the crowd is stunned into silence. He's told the story all wrong! What kind of landowner is this, who after losing all his servants would sacrifice even his beloved son? What kind of *God* is this who would sacrifice even his beloved son? The crowd is stunned into silence, so Jesus answers his own question. "The landowner will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not heard this scripture: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'?"

The parable ends. The crowd *is* amazed. They recognize this scripture too. It is from the Psalms. The son is vindicated. The beloved son the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. It is the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes.

What kind of landowner sends his only beloved son? What kind of God sends his only beloved Son? This is in the scriptures too, when God speaks to Moses beside that cleft in a rock. "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." Amen.

Servants of Christ

This message was prepared for Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community's Blessing of the Animals and Celebration of Creation service on October 5, 2014. The sermon texts are Colossians 1:15-20 & Luke 22:24-27.

Rich Hanlon

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On Labor Day, I found a little squirrel at the base of an oak tree who had fallen out of her nest. She lay on the ground, curled up, a helpless little ball of gray fur with a broken leg. When my wife and I took her home she was just four weeks old and her eyes were not even opened yet. I remember at 5 weeks when her eyes opened and she looked at me for the first time with her deep blue eyes. I remember at 6 weeks when her broken leg was completely healed and she could climb like any squirrel should. Oakley brought such an amazing amount of joy to our lives as she would sit atop my shoulder, my head, under the notch of my arm and sometimes beneath my beard…in short, I was the tree she wanted to climb! She would affectionately nibble my fingers and she would make squeaking and purring noises to express her need and affection. This kind of joy that we experience with our special pets is a gift from God, as our pets are gifts of God to us that we might cherish in the loving care that we give to them.

Our dog Ivy is a rescue dog. We found her at the Central Pennsylvania Humane Society. I remember the day that I first met Ivy; she was sad and depressed seeming to have lost all hope. I remember the day that we brought her home, and the peace, joy, and comfort she felt to be in our care and part of our family. I continue to be amazed at the love Ivy expresses towards children and the empathy that she expresses towards those who are sad or sorrowful. Her eyes, floppy ears, and caring demeanor are always enough to brighten the day. I experience God's love in the gift of Ivy. Many of us have probably experienced God's loving presence in the lives of the animals whom we have developed meaningful relationships with.

I tell you the stories of Ivy and Oakley to express that all of God's creatures have a need and that all of God's creatures have a gift to give. As God's creatures, we all need each other and we all have ourselves to give for the other. This is not some kind of balance or equal exchange like the operation of a finely tuned machine. What I'm talking about is a lot messier than that; what I'm talking about is the motion of grace; the motion of God's presence in the world that God created.

In Genesis 1:28 humans are commanded to rule over all of the fish of the sea, the birds, and the land animals. In a number of translations, the words "govern," or "have dominion" are used to describe the human responsibility towards creation. At first glance this sounds at best to be

incompatible with the concept of stewardship, service, and grace filled relationships with the natural world. But if we are to take a look at what Jesus thinks about what it means to have dominion we catch a glimpse into a new way of life and of understanding God's call to humanity. In Luke 22:24-27 Jesus says that the greatest is the one who takes the lowest place as servant to the rest.

First, let us consider how great we must be to place ourselves on a pedestal that is above service to any of God's creatures? This includes the deer, the cat, the bird, even the worm. To make this assertion of greatness over anything, we must necessarily be greater than Jesus Christ, who placed himself in humble servitude to the entire creation… worms included…as we read in the letter to the Colossians, that "through him God reconciled everything…everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross." Wow, to assess greatness over anything sounds like a dangerous claim. If we are truly following the way of Jesus Christ, there is no creature that is not worthy of our time, our service, and our love.

I don't know about you but I want to be a servant. I want to be a servant to the people in my life. I want to be a servant to Ivy the dog and Oakley the squirrel. I want to be a servant to birds, and bees, and trees and flowers and beetles and worms. I want to be a servant of gardens and parks and rivers and lakes and mountains. I want to be a servant to all so that the servant of all can live through me. I don't want to be so concerned with greatness as I am with growing in humility so that I might take the place of least among all God's creatures not for any benefit of my own, but so the Lord of all creation might be present in service to all through this life that I am living. We all have a need, and we the creatures of God are all gifts to one another, so let's work together to embrace the call of loving service to the world that God created in service to us.

Prayer of dedication:

Lord God, we dedicate ourselves to your loving service for the benefit of your creation which you have entrusted into our care, and we ask that you give us grace so we can be the hands, the feet, and the heart of Jesus for all creatures. Amen.

The Peace of the Lord be with you always!

A sermon preached the day after President Carl announced his retirement in the Hicks Memorial Chapel on May 15, 2014. It is transcribed from the oral version. The sermon text is Matthew 5:21-26.

Edwin Chr. van Driel

The Rev. Dr. Edwin Chr. van Driel is Bicentennial Associate Professor of Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

When several years ago we started revitalizing our community's worship life, we included as one of the rules for the liturgy that every worship service should have an "Exchange of Peace." This was not greeted with enthusiasm by everybody. I remember one of my colleagues saying to me: "You mean I have to touch people?" Some students stopped me in the hallway and exclaimed "You want us to sing 'kum ba yah' everyday!" And indeed, in some way we want you to sing 'kum ba yay' everyday; and we want you to touch each other in chapel – because we want you not just to hear the words, but also to experience the peace that comes from Christ, a peace that comes as a grace which wants to encompasses all of what we are.

The "Exchange of Peace" as a liturgical form is not just a moment where we simply greet one another to say "Good Morning!" It is liturgical practice that comes to us from the early church, where it developed in response to something Jesus said in this morning's gospel reading:

when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Mt. 5:23-24).

The "Exchange of Peace" we offer one another in the liturgy is an offering of forgiveness and reconciliation. As a community that each week gathered around "the altar" to celebrate the Lord's Table, the early church read Jesus as speaking about communion. They took him to say that God does not want to hear from us, if we do not want to hear to one another. Or, to put it differently, if we are not willing to truly be shaped by what God gives us at this table – forgiveness, grace – God does not want to receive what we bring *to* this table: eucharist, thanksgiving. The church tried to live out liturgically what Jesus commanded his disciples here to do, and this is why the "Exchange of Peace" has two proper places in the flow of our worship service: If there is communion, then at the moment we move from pulpit to table – as Jesus said, before we come to the altar – or, if there is no communion, after the Declaration of Forgiveness, so that we now pass on to our neighbors that what we ourselves just received from God.

It is actually quite stunning what Jesus here says to his disciples.

I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool", you will be liable to the hell of fire (Mt. 5:22).

Note, that Jesus makes no distinction between "righteous" and "unrighteousness" anger. He does not say: Sometimes it is okay to be angry; but when you are wrongly angered, then you are subject to judgment. He does not say: Sometimes people really behave inappropriate; then it would be all right to call them fools. No, *all* anger, *all* bitterness, *all* name calling is excluded. And then, when he continues and speaks about leaving one's gift before the altar so as to reconcile with one's brothers and sisters, he does not say: "If you did something wrong, and you remember that therefore your brother or sister are angry with you…" But, rather, whether or not you or the other person were at fault; whether or not you believe you were in the right - if you in any way know that someone is angry with you, *you* go, and *you* reconcile, before you come in God's presence.

For Jesus, the will to reconcile is clearly at the very heart, at the essence of faithful living. Reconciliation is not one of the modes in which we are to relate to others; it is *the* mode. The will to reconcile is to be the lens through which we engage others. Not anger, but reconciliation. No insult, but reconciliation. No name calling, but reconciliation.

I know of a campus ministry where a couple of months ago the pastor in a communion service preached on this text. At this point in the sermon, having emphasized what Jesus is telling those who want to be his disciples, he looked around at his congregation said: "Well, you have about an hour. You go now, and you make that phone call. You send that email. You go back to your dorm room and have that conversation. And when you come back in an hour we'll celebrate the Lord's Table."

I'm very tempted to say the same thing to you.

But I know Dean Jackson really wants me be to be done with the service in the forty minutes that are allotted to me, so I won't. But it will be

good for us nonetheless to ask ourselves: What would it look like if I did? What would it look like to center one's life in reconciliation; what would that look like not just for our individual lives, but also, what would it look like for our communal live?

This year the faculty has been talking a lot about theological education as *formation*. Theological education is not just receiving a lot of information; it is also, and primarily so, being formed in habits and practices. Some of this formation is individual; what we call "spiritual formation" is often focused on shaping individual postures and habits. But other aspects of formation are communal. This is what we call *ecclesial formation*. In ministry, you will not just operate as an individual. You will serve in the context of a group, a wider community. Those of you who seek ordination will, as ministers, serve as representatives of the church. But what does it mean to serve in a church with great diversity? What does it mean to serve in ministry side by side with people with whom you strongly disagree? What do in such context Jesus' words mean: "If you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your altar before the altar and go?" What does it mean in such ecclesial community that Jesus says: No anger, but reconciliation. No insult, but reconciliation. No name calling, but reconciliation? Even if you know that you are right; even if you believe that you are standing for a godly cause – no conflict, but reconciliation. One reason why we want you as students to come here to Pittsburgh to study together, and live together, and eat together, and go to chapel together, is because we want you to learn what it means to be living together in community. What does it mean to be living and working together with people from such different backgrounds and heritage, what does it mean to be living together with people of such different opinions and convictions, sometimes convictions held, one believes, for the sake of Christ – and then Christ coming to us and saying: "Go, reconcile with your brother, your sister."

That's what I was *going* to talk about. But then, yesterday, President Carl threw a wrench in the plans by announcing his retirement in one year. And so I wondered: Should I change plans, change my text, preach on something more appropriate for the first gathering in chapel after President Carl's announcement? After all, presidential retirements mean

great change – not just for him, but also for us.

But then – ministers don't get to choose their text; the text chooses them. This is the text handed to us by the daily lectionary. We cannot just randomly pick something different.

And then it occurred to me that this text *does* speak to us, exactly right now. Retirements are bittersweet moments. They stir up a variety of emotions: gratefulness for what Bill and Jane have meant in our midst; sadness because we will have to say good-bye after they have been part of our community for so many years; but also anxiety, because the future is suddenly unclear.

And anxiety breeds conflict. Uncertainly stirs up angry words. Unclarity about the future leaves ample space for power play.

It is here that Jesus words speak forcefully: No anger, but reconciliation. No insult, but reconciliation. No name calling, but reconciliation.

This year we will be calling a new president. I use that word advisedly. Seminary presidents are not appointed, they are called. A call is a result of a discernment process; a process in which, as a community, listen to where God is leading us. In a discernment process, the loudest voice is not necessarily the most important. All voices are important, because it is about discerning the still, small voice of the Spirit, who will be leading us from here into the future.

Jesus is not inviting us here, I believe, to a "moral" way of life. He does not give us a "model," a set of commandments. But rather, he tells us, how he lives, how God lives. What Jesus speaks about in this text is *God's* way of life. God who, when God knows that we are angry with him, does not wait for us to get over ourselves and come to the altar with our gifts. God who does not sit in the heavenly throne room saying" "If you want to make things right, you come to me!" But rather, God comes to us, where ever we are, however we feel, and reconciles. God leaves behind the heavenly altar, steeps down, to bring us forgiveness and reconciliation. And it is therefore, that when *we* gather together, we reach out to one another, and we say: "the peace of the Lord be with you always." Amen.

Waiting for Justice

The following sermon was preached on Sunday, December 12, 2014 at First Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth, PA. The sermon texts were Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 and Luke 4:14-22. It examines the problem of current injustice and suffering in light of God's promises to bring justice and healing—without necessarily solving the problem, but ultimately concluding that we can trust God to keep God's promises.

Alina Kanaski

Alina Kanaski is a middler M. Div. student from Tucson, AZ.

This is a season of waiting: waiting until when we can open presents, waiting for that time off of work, waiting for it to be time to go spend a day or a week with our family. Maybe some of us are just waiting for this season to be over. As Christians, this is also a time of waiting for God. We spend this time of Advent waiting to remember the time that Israel waited for the Savior to come. We wait, too, for God to come again, to make this world new again and remove all the pain and suffering.

That is what Isaiah, the prophet of our Old Testament reading, was looking forward to. This passage was written at a time when Israel had been taken into exile by the Assyrians. Most of the people had been deported to a land that wasn't their own, maybe separated from their families. Maybe they had seen their families killed in front of them. Those deportees certainly had experienced Assyria's conquest of the land, and war is always a horrific thing to experience. Others were left in the land, subject to the Assyrians who came to live there and the soldiers, surrounded by the devastation of war. The Temple, the center of Judaism, was destroyed. To Jews, that was where God dwelled. Where was God now? Had He deserted Israel?

The actual conquest was a few generations removed now, when this passage was written. But, the people are still living with the memory of what has happened. They are living in a strange culture, or living at home, poor and oppressed. Some of the people have been allowed to return to Israel, to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. They are faced with a daunting task, rebuilding from utter ruin in the midst of opposition. They are still a conquered people.

And so the writer, Isaiah, longs passionately for justice. He can see, easily, how broken this world is. He can see all the things that are wrong, that are evil. He longs for a time when prisoners will be set free, when those who mourn or who have broken hearts will receive healing and comfort, when the people will be able to rejoice rather than mourn, when ruins will be repaired, when the people will be righteous and that righteousness will be rewarded and glorified. He longs for a time when God will visibly fulfill His promises, when he will see that God has kept His covenant with His people.

When Jesus quotes these words 600 years later, injustice was still clear to see everywhere. Israel was a captive nation, a part of the Roman Empire. Taxes were high; people were losing their land. Roman soldiers could do what they wanted. Injustice was everywhere, for everyone to see. That was why they were waiting so anxiously for a savior. But Jesus says: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." *Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy, this longing.* Jesus will bring justice. He will bring an end to mourning, to broken hearts, to evil. He shows us that God is eternally faithful. Isaiah calls it "an eternal covenant." Jesus extends that faithfulness not just among Israel, but among all the nations. To all of us.

That was why Jesus came to earth, was born as a human. God didn't just want to bring justice; He wants to comfort us in our pain. He came to earth, to live as a human, to experience humanity so that He can be with us, right beside us, in all of our suffering and struggles. God is concerned with every bit of our lives, the good and the bad and the mundane and the earth shattering and everything in between. What a source of joy! Not only does God want to be beside us in our pain, but He actually came down from heaven so that He could be beside us.

And yet, things don't seem to have changed much since this prophecy was written, or since Jesus read that prophecy aloud. We are still surrounded by injustice. According to the United Nations, 805 million people do not have enough food to eat. They are literally starving.[1] Feeding America estimates that 49 million people in America struggle to put food on the table each day.[2] Slavery still exists; 35 million people are slaves around the world, including here in America, according to the Walk Free Foundation.[3] Billions live in poverty. Billions suffer under injustice, whether they are persecuted or discriminated against because of their religion, because of their gender, because of their politics, because of their appearance. Ferguson is still on everyone's minds and hearts six

1 World Food Programme, "Hunger Statistics." http://www.wfp.org/hunger/stats.
2 Feeding America, "Hunger and Poverty Fact Sheet," http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/hunger-and-poverty/hunger-and-poverty-fact-sheet.html.
3 Larry Elliott, "Modern slavery affects more than 35 million people, report finds," The Guardian, 17 Nov. 2014, accessed 9 Dec. 2015. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/17/modern-slavery-35-million-people-walk-free-foundation-report.

months after Darren Wilson shot and killed Michael Brown. Whatever happened between them, it is clear that there is a problem. Here. So many across the country know that something is wrong, so wrong that they feel that there is nothing they can do but respond with violence. I am not saying that violence is right, because of course it's not. But I do believe that violence should make us reflect. What have they experienced that has made them so angry?

Unemployment for African Americans is twice that for whites. White workers earn, on average, almost $20,000 dollars more than African Americans each year. African Americans are four times more likely to be sent to jail than is a white person.[4] And there are so many more examples of injustice, here in Elizabeth, in America, around the world. Far too many to list, today or any other day.

It's overwhelming. It's heart breaking. It's challenging. How can this prophecy of justice have been fulfilled when there is clearly still injustice? How can we have joy when we are surrounded by suffering and injustice?

I'm not trying to stand up here and say that I have all the answers, because I don't. But that's part of being human. That's part of what Jesus entered into when he was born in a stable in Bethlehem. But God's promises are clear: "as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations." A time of justice is coming. A time of righteousness is coming. A time of joy is coming. We cannot know how or when, but it is coming. God has promised, and God keeps His promises. It's something that we see again and again through the Bible, as God keeps His promises to give Israel land, to send a Messiah to save them, and to be with them always. Just so will God keep this promise.

Today, a few things are different from when Isaiah spoke lamenting injustice

4 Brad Plumer. "These ten graphs show the black-white economic gap hasn't budged in 50 years." The Washington Post, 28 Aug. 2013, accessed 9 Dec. 2015. http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/08/28/these-seven-charts-show-the-black-white-economic-gap-hasnt-budged-in-50-years/.

and promising its end, or when Jesus first claimed to be the fulfillment of that prophecy. Jesus not only came as a human, as we celebrate during this season--He also died as a human. And then He rose from the dead. He defeated sin. Sin has refused to accept that defeat and is still fighting, but we know the end is only a matter of time. Sin's defeat is immanent.

And while we're waiting and hoping and praying for that defeat, God has sent us His Holy Spirit to guide us. The Spirit shows us how to follow God, and enables us to do so.

This is a season of joy and a season of waiting. We wait for God's promised justice. We wait for a better time, a better world. But we cannot wait passively. We cannot just sit around. Isaiah didn't--God *sent* him to "proclaim liberty", to "release captives" and "to comfort all who mourn." And Jesus didn't just live as a carpenter, ignoring what God was asking Him to do. He taught. He healed the sick and fed the hungry and did what God asked of Him. There was nothing else He *could* do. God says, "I love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing." We cannot stand by and do nothing in the face of injustice when we follow a God who loves justice and hates injustice.

And so I would encourage each of you to spend some time thinking this Advent season about your own life. What does God's justice look like? How can I show that in my own life? There's the Salvation Army bucket downstairs that will go to helping people here in Elizabeth. There's all of this church's other work with the Food Bank here. But there's also more. Is there anyone you can reach out to this Christmas season, someone who may be feeling lonely or need some kindness? How can you ...?

The world can seem overwhelming. It can seem as if nothing you do can make a difference, but that is absolutely not true. God uses even the smallest moments to show Himself to us, to teach us something, to show us His love. Even the smallest action can make a huge difference.

Searching for an example of this idea, of the difference one life can make, I realized that during this season how can I *not* talk about *It's a Wonderful Life*? George Bailey wishes to have never been born, and the world changes. He is able to see how many people he has touched, how

many lives he has changed.

We are not told how many lives we have touched, but each of us can touch lives. Let each of us live, through the love of God and the grace of Jesus Christ and with the help of the Holy Spirit, let each of us live lives of love and justice, touching all those around us. Amen.

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Say Something (Sermon) and A Silent Hope (Poem)

The narrative in 2 Samuel 13:1-22 is sadly not the first and will not be the last. After getting rape by her half-brother Amnon, Tamar is ducted taped by the silence and lack of response from her father, King David. And when her brother Absalom finds out about the crime that has been committed against his sister by their half-brother, he tells Tamar to remain silence. Unfortunately, silencing victims does not just happen in foreign lands and ancient stories. Our own society literally and figuratively silences victims too. When silence aids injustice, silence cannot be the norm of our society.

Laurie A. Gourdet

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The background of our text this evening revolves around King David's children. For illustration purposes, let us pretend that this building known to us as Long Hall is the royal residence where Tamar, the virgin princess and King David's only daughter, resides with her father. In separate houses on the ground are two of David's sons, including extended members of the royal family who also live on the grounds. Perhaps, Amnon, heir to David's throne, lives in Callahan Hall. And Absalom, second in line to the Davidic throne, lives in McMillian just a few feet from the royal residence. Now, David's son Amnon is not only stalking his half-sister Tamar, but Amnon is obsessively in love with Tamar, and mopes around the grounds like a depressed man. Talking to Amnon one day, his cousin Jonadab inquired about the source of his state of depression. Upon finding out that Tamar is the source of Amnon's sad state, Jonadab tells Amnon how to capture Tamar as prey in order to have his way with her and be happy. Following through with this deceptive plan, Amnon lies to his father King David about being sick and got his father to agree to send his sister Tamar to come to the house to cook for him. As Tamar was about ready to plate and serve Amnon the meal she prepared for him, Amnon demanded everyone in his house to leave, told Tamar to come serve him the food in his bedroom, and asked Tamar to have an incestuous act with him.

Listen now to 2 Samuel 13:11c-22 from the New Revised Standard Version:

"…'Come, lie with me, my sister.' She answered him, 'No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.' But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her. Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, 'Get out!' But she said to him, 'No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me.' But he would not listen to her. He called the young man who served him and said, 'Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her.' Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for this

is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times. So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went. Her brother Absalom said to her, 'Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart.' So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. When King David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn. But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had raped his sister Tamar."[5]

Tonight, I will be focusing on part of verse 20, which states: "…Be quiet for now, my sister…"

How many of you have heard of the phrase "if you see something, say something?" Whether you have heard of this phrase or not, after this sermon, I hope you never forget it, so that if the need ever arise for you to say something, you would say something.

The New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority, known simply to New Yorkers as "MTA" is possibly the number one commuter system in the nation with "5.5 million daily subway commuters," which does not include commuters who travel on buses or rail systems.[6] After the tragedy of 9/11, MTA with the newly formed United States Department of Homeland Security came up with the campaign phrase, "if you see something, say something."[7] This phrase was designed to combat and stop possible terrorist threats or activities targeted not only at NYC but at the entire nation. This phrase has been so effective for the city that 54 other organizations in various locations in the world have adopted the phrase for many reasons.[8] Today, New Yorkers of different age, race,

5 Harold Attridge, Revised ed. The Harper Collins Study Bible: Fully Revised and Updated New Revised Standard Version with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books Student Edition. (San Francisco, CA: Harper One, 1989), 453-454.
6 "http://www.mta.info/news-subway-ridership-l-r-g-b-d-4-7/2014/03/24/2013-ridership-reaches-65-year-high -,", Accessed November 5, 2014.
7 http: //usgovinfo.about.com/od/defenseandsecurity/a/if-you-see-something-say-something.htm,", Accessed November 5, 2015
8 "http: //nymag.com/news/intelligencer/mta-anti-terrorism-2012-10/,", Accessed November 5, 2014

gender, religion, social and economic classes know this phrase as the habitual norm for reporting suspicious activities to law enforcement officials. This phrase is so powerful that it helped the NYC Police Department to stop a planned car bombing in Times Square in 2010 after receiving calls from a street vendor.[9] As New York City's population increases, the phrase "if you see something, say something" is being taught even in elementary classrooms. My seven years old nephew now knows to alert his parents or teacher if he sees an unattended backpack or package when he travels on the subway or bus. In many ways, the phrase "if you see something, say something" serves to give a voice to the nearly 3,200 voices that were silence on September 11, 2001.[10] However, there remain many people in our society who have or is experiencing injustice who endure silence through no-fault of their own with nobody to speak for them, so will you say something if you know, suspect or see something?

In this passage, many people knew of Tamar's rape. Yet, many aided and abetted her in remaining captive in her silence. First, there is the guard in verse 18 who upon following the orders of Amnon threw Tamar out of Amnon's house like yesterday's trash, not caring that she was David's daughter because the shame of her rape was not greater than her royal identity! I suspect the real fear deep beneath all of the physical and psychological trauma is that our royal heritage as children of the God of the Universe has been stolen from us in the traumatic act. Surely this unnamed male royal guard who is Amnon's guard either personally heard or saw Tamar being rape, and yet, this guard said nothing in Tamar's defense. Secondly, when her brother Absalom of the same parents finds out what evil act his half-brother Amnon has done to his sister Tamar, Absalom too said not a word to Amnon. Instead, Absalom tells Tamar not only to keep silence about the rape, but allows Tamar to live in his house with her feelings of anger, bitterness and shame. Lastly, Tamar's father, David, King of Israel with all his authoritative power said nothing, did nothing about the travesty that happened to Tamar. Indeed, the guard, Absalom and David either saw, heard, and knew

9 http: //www.nytimes.com/2010/05/02/nyregion/02timessquare.html?adxnnl=1,", Accessed November 5, 2014
10 www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/911report/documents/911report,", Accessed November 5, 2014

something about the injustice that had been done and did nothing. The lack of rebuke to Amnon immediately following his crime only helped to mentally and figuratively place a piece of duct tape over Tamar's mouth, thus, cutting off her ability to speak, and victimizing her all over again.

Like Tamar, women are being raped on college and university campuses all across this country and some of these women's mouths have been ducted taped and silenced when people who know, saw or heard about something say nothing to bring these perpetrators to justice.[11]

Like Tamar, incarcerated men and women throughout this country who are placed in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day are silenced in many ways. Tuesday night, I watched a documentary on PBS on solitary confinement. Horrified, I watched mostly men get placed in often rigidly cold cells attempt many different forms of suicide as means to gaining freedom from solitary confinement. The fact is, regardless of the crimes these prisoners have committed, when these human beings rejoin our society, outside of their friends and family, the prison system duct tapes and silences these prisoners' voices because solitary confinement records are not a matter of public record, and correction officers are not going to say anything publicly about the mistreatment of inmates.

Like Tamar, the alleged victims of popular actor Stephen Collins, who played a beloved pastor on the television show 7th Heaven were ducted taped and silenced all over again when his wife upon finding out about these abuses said nothing to law officials.[12]

Besides these three stories of injustices I just mentioned, there are countless other stories. Other stories of injustice includes molestations, spousal abuse, sex trafficking, labor related exploitation of immigrants, shooting victims, neglected children, severe discipline of a toddler by a famous father, abuse of power formed against the people of Palestine, unfair educational admittance practices, voter registration supplication, and so on. Sorrowfully, we cannot attribute one given gender on any of

11 "Http: //wtkr.com/2014/10/08/college-facing-rape-lawsuit-leads-state-in-booze-violations/,", Accessed November 5, 2014.
12 http: //www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/19/stephen-collins-child-molestation_n_6010746.html,", Accessed on October 6, 2014.

these victims because it happens to both men and women.

Unfortunately, the practice of figuratively silencing victims in our society is nothing new. We need not go searching only in a foreign land or ancient stories to find other Tamars because some voiceless victims exist in our own backyards. The Tamar in this passage lived in close proximity to people who had first-hand knowledge of her rape who said nothing about the injustice she suffered from her brother Amnon. Who lives, worships, studies and works in close proximity to us who may be looking for us to say something about the injustices we may be aware of? Regretfully, there is no official sign that identifies for us who our Tamars are or what Tamar looks like. Nevertheless, we, as church leaders and preachers, credit or non-credit seeking seminarians, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, professors, and friends are required by God to do justice (Micah 6:8). When silence aids injustice, silence cannot be the norm of our society. Injustice of any kind is not of God!

Rather, we ought to always say something about the injustices that plague our communities. We ought to always say something about sexual assaults, police brutality, inhumane treatments of prisoners and oppression of others. We ought to always say something by "speaking the truth in love" to the offender on behalf of the offended (Eph.4:15). We ought to always say something by calling or writing to political leaders to demand equal pay and housing for all, equal prosecution and protection under the law, and proper treatment of the poor. And sometimes, we ought to go and ask for forgiveness from the person we have wronged. Beloved, saying something is never about orchestrating vengeance for justice. Especially not the orchestrated murder kind of justice, which Absalom had others render to Amnon for raping his sister for as it is written, "vengeance is for the Lord to repay" (Rom 12:19).

As I close, let me just say that although God is not mentioned at all in this passage, God is very present. You see, Absalom's vengeful assassination of Amnon was not a real resolution for Tamar. Absalom's vengeance only satisfied Absalom. There is only One Person who can bring Tamar a real resolution, and that person is God. God is the only specialist that is able to take Tamar's brokenness and use that brokenness for another purpose in order to bring restoration and hope

to Tamar. For "God's strength is made perfect in Tamar's weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

Beloved, yes, "God's Grace is always sufficient" even when God's Grace is not evident during our trials and tribulations (2 Cor 12:9). I am proof that after brokenness, there is restoration because God used my pain and continues to strengthen me, so that I can fulfill the purpose for which I was created. When I say God's Grace is sufficient to my pain, know that it is coming from a well inside of me that gets past the cliché and touches my soul. As I leave you, my question to all of you is: "will you say something, if you know or saw something?" To God Be the Glory! Amen.

A SILENT HOPE
(2 Samuel 13: 1-22)
By Laurie A. Gourdet

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
His heavy breathing and his scent
As his darkness penetrated my unbroken skin, he raped me!
He took what did not belong to him.

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
I wanted to scream but the words would not come.
He told me he hated me; I hated myself
And I did not wish to survive, I'm not sure I did.

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
The long sleeve purple robe, white lace trims, gold stitching
My favorite, now my burden hidden in a bag under my bed
Frozen with bloodstain as the scar that remains.

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
Asking why – why would he, how could he
He is my brother
He was supposed to protect me.

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
Rivers of tears on my pillows in the stillness of the night
And baking bread became a sharp knife slicing across my flesh
With memories of the broken pieces of bread that were left untouched on the bed.

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
Absalom and Father's silence etched in my heart.
Never to speak of the terror.
Never to speak of the violation.
Never to speak of the injustice.

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
Thinking does anyone care what happens to me?
Does anyone care to help me?
Does anyone care to speak for me?

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
The horrified silence in the other women's faces.
I wished I would die each time I saw Amnon on the grounds
But time just passed me by.

Drowning in my Silence, I Remember
Hearing "I see your tears, I know your pain"
Suddenly the voice grew stronger "I see your tears, and I feel your pain"
Open your heart to me, "behold, I stand at the door knocking."

Living with my Silence, I find power in a friend who is my brother and my comforter
He allows me to cast my silence and my pain on him
A brother who allows me to cast all my shame and my brokenness on him
A brother who died for me
A loving brother who gave me his peace
Who promises to return to take me to a dwelling place that he has gone to prepare for me.

This peace was created by William H Jackson, III, an alum of PTS, and is inspired by the sermon and poem text of 2 Samuel 13: 1-22.

POETRY

Pittsburgh Theological Journal

SPRING 2015

PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Three Chords

Three chords is a poem in honor of the worship leaders who connect us to God on Sunday morning through their musical gifts. This poem is an example of a villanelle, a poetic form first used in the Renaissance, but made popular by two poets, the Welshman, Dylan Thomas in his "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Goodnight" and the American, Elizabeth Bishop in her "One Art".

Rev. David Averill

Rev. David Averill is a Doctor of Ministry student at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in the Parish Focus that meets on the campus of Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida; pastor in the Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church; husband to his better half, Alesia Kuliashova Averill; and father to a baby boy named Daniel Taylor Averill.

Three chords strummed for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
And she sings like a dove moves on the wind,
Songs of praise that the Lord loves most.

Light descends through a stained glass dove and glows
On her face, while fingers on frets ascend
To three chords strummed for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

There never has been song or prayer as close
Than sung by one who sings, pardoned of sin,
Songs of praise that the Lord loves most.

Like David long ago on harp composed,
She offers on guitar notes that begin
Three chords strummed for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Walking toward the mount, his disciples chose
To sing hymns with Jesus before his end,
Songs of praise that the Lord loves most.

She need not sing with the heavenly host
To reveal God's grace manifest within
Three chords strummed for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Songs of praise that the Lord loves most.

Say Something

This spoken word poem was written as a reflection on exegetical work on the passage Zephaniah 3:1-13, with special focus on verses 9-10. It reflects on the power of words and language, not only through Scripture but also the weight and power words have in our everyday lives.

Rebecca Dix

Rebecca Dix is a storyteller and wordsmith who is in her third and final year of the M.Div. program.

Say Something
    But not just anything
See, what slips from lips drips components
Potent enough to own oceans
To command the sand to withstand the hands
That comb its contents back
Keeping it captive from its daredevil attempts at kissing the ocean mist
Embolden to persist, to try again, and again, yet even after fighting hard carving past caveats
To get so close, only to miss
See, from the beginning, the symphonic resonance of phonetic compositions
Had the audaciousness to bring creation into being
Call them good and whole and green
Leaving humans to be washed in the wake,
And then those with the poetic or story telling dispositions
Were possessed into a literary chase
Questing over the centuries for just one more taste

Say Something
    But not just anything
Words are more than a babbling brook
Flowing from streams of consciousness
They are things, matter
They make demands of the space in which they are encased
More than wild oats we hope to scatter
For careless clattering chatter ends up shattering
More than what we bargained for
We have enough speech that breeds conceit
Seized by reasons seasoned through indignation
Superseding the worth of those breathing or bleeding
Each syllable another stich for our next inquisition
Each slander slathering graffiti on the Sistine chapel that are our palettes

Parading violence in the streets
Allowing chaos to throw its own birthday parties
Leaves lost and alone those with the weight of weariness sewn to their bones

Soiled by war, finger painting fire with the gauntlet of fears and hates
To which some days we feign existence
Those words, nope, I didn't hear
But our deafness
An apparent inheritance of our parents
Renting to us qualitative notion
Evaluating the equity of equality
Whose rate we can't afford, so we take out loans
To avoid stress to tomorrow's pension
Is granting to us a debt we can never repay

Say Something
    But not just anything
Let the words that fall sound not like a clanging gong
But be libations to liberate nations
Who are stationed opposed to creation
Feet and fists planted in one another's faces
So disheveled they no longer recognize the family resemblance
Instead are living into an inheritance of resentment
So when you spit what is to be writ, let be to split the barricades of deception
For whatever is said, is learned
Our today deserves better than the lessons of yesterday taught tomorrow

So Say Something
    And let it be a summer rain
Listen to the spaces in between

Let it be a pure speech
Swept bare, naked, exposed
Barren of the armaments of pride and half assed excuses
Refused to be fueled by the hubris which
Shattered language in the first place
That yes, provided us a linguistic garden of symphonies
Bursting to the brim with every hue of petunias and peonies
Which should not be subsumed
But the confounding of the language
Confundir el idioma
Hùnxiáo de yǔyán
Confondere la lingua
Synchýsei ti glóssa

Became the newly tilled soil, in which we sowed the same seed
With a harvest like celery – not actually that nutritious to eat
So speak, and say something utterly beautiful
Striped away from accolades of our own making
And delight in the refrain of the only Name that will remain

BOOK REVIEWS

Pittsburgh
Theological
Journal

SPRING 2015

The Origins of Racism in the West

The book under review addresses the historical origins of racism as an ideology in the West. Covering antiquity, the middle ages, and the early-modern period, the essays offer a historical development of racism and its entry into western civilization. It is not the intention of the editors, nor those of the various contributors from Israel, Europe, and the United States, to address racism in its modern day form(s) but to present how the "conceptual mechanisms" first took form and spread throughout the world.

Rev. Anthony Rivera, M.Div., Th. M.,

The Rev. Anthony Rivera is Associate Director of Admissions at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Eliav-Feldon, Miriam, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, eds. *The Origins of Racism in the West.* Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009/2013. Pp. xiv + 333.

Cloth/Paper. $119.99/$31.99.
ISBN 978-0521888554/978-1107687264.

Racism as an ideology dates as far back as antiquity. Exemplified through various outlets such as literature, conquests, forced labor, and rhetoric, racism's presence has plagued humanity for centuries. Modern day expressions are but the blossoming of seeds planted long ago. To understand race, racism, and all things related, one is invited to study ancient history – in this case, the ancient Greco-Roman world.

The essays presented in this volume, - delivered at the Howard Gilman International Conference at the Tel Aviv University in December 2005 - cover antiquity, the middle ages, and the early-modern time periods. These offer a historical development of racism; its entry into western civilization, and how the concept took shape and spread throughout the world. They do not intend to address racism in its modern day form(s).

Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Ziegler do an excellent exposé in the book's introduction. In offering of a definition to the term "racist" – "an ideology which claims to be based on scientific truth"[1] – they declare that one of the difficulties in the study of the history of racism is when it is "compounded by profound differences in the perception of the phenomenon, determined as they are by specific historical experiences and social realities."[2] A distinction is made between ethnic identity and racism. The former includes "how a person, or group of persons, thinks about her/himself or themselves, how others see him/her or them, how this affects the person or persons."[3] The latter involves the disallowance by European society of "race" as a "respectable concept after World War II" while "the term never died out in the US and is still used there widely."[4]

Covering the period of antiquity, Benjamin Isaac asserts that because racism is "a set of ideas developed in an attempt to rationalize the irrational,"[5] it is important to "look for its origins in the intellectual sphere."[6] This calls for an examination in the writings of upper-class authors since "racism spreads from the top to bottom."[7] Isaac comments on classicists who resist the possibility of racist ideas in

1 Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, eds., The Origins of Racism in the West (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009/2013), 1.
2 Ibid., 2.
3 Ibid., 6.
4 Ibid.
5 Benjamin Isaac, "Racism: a rationalization of prejudice", 35.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.

Greco-Roman writings and, for that matter, "a connection between the intellectual climate and the popular opinion in Greece and Rome."[8] H. A. Shapiro discusses how Athenian artists concocted a fictional imagery of the Persians that not only appeared on household goods, but also resulted in a false perception that even the Persians themselves could differentiate between the real and the false. David Goldberg's essay is, perhaps, the most provocative for it specifically addresses black Africans in antiquity; in fact, there existed an anti-Black sentiment during that period: "it is the Blacks' physical being, and in particular their skin color, that is found objectionable, not their customs or what was believed to be their innate characteristic."[9] Goldberg presents how the Greeks and Romans associated the color black with death and the underworld, good and evil. Particular mention is made showing how the color red, and not black, is used in the Hebrew Bible to represent sin. Interestingly, "Biblical literature, however, does not include the dark-skinned person in its repertoire of metaphors representing evil. That begins in the postbiblical period. Philo, the first-century Hellenistic-Jewish philosopher, allegorizes the blackness of the Ethiopians as evil."[10] Moreover, the Church Fathers made "extensive use of the metaphor of darkness as sin as applied to dark-skinned people in their allegorical interpretations of the Bible."[11] Rabbinic and patristic exegetes are no exceptions, as Goldberg convincingly argues. Buell brings the period to a close with "Early Christian Universalism and Modern Forms of Racism."[12]

Six essays cover the Middle Ages (cir.1154 – 1485). Bartlett addresses how ethnic differences were illustrated during this era. The illustrations and the accompanying discussion make the compelling assessment that "if one is looking for 'the origins of racism in the West', such visual imagery must surely have a part to play."[13] Biller shows the way proto-racial thought made its way into the faculties of the arts – i.e., natural science – and medicine during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. De Miramon's presentation on the invention of the concept of race in the late Middle Ages is worth perusing on its own merits. Nirenberg closes the period asking, "Was there race before modernity?"[14] His

8 Ibid., 37.
9 David Goldberg, "Racism, color symbolism, and color prejudice", 88.
10 Ibid., 94.
11 Ibid., 95.
12 Denise Kimber Buell, 109-131.
13 Robert Bartlett, "Illustrating ethnicity in the Middle Ages", 156.
14 David Nirenberg, 232-264.

essay discusses how medieval Spain stigmatized the Jews with the terms such as "raza" and "casta" – terms "which emerged in the 1430s in discussions on animal breeding and reproduction." [15]

The early-modern period (cir.1500 – 1800), covered in four essays, address the spread of racism and its effects within and beyond Europe. Hsia makes the case that Christian – Jewish relations in the pre-modern West served as a "prism through which were refracted the ethnic or racial attitudes that shaped the modern world."[16] Focusing on German Protestant discourse after the Reformation and Catholic discourse toward the Jews, he argues that an attitude of racial superiority emerged "that began to represent religious differences between Christianity and all other religions in reference to non-cultural criteria: blood and physique."[17] Eliav-Feldon covers the plight of the Gypsies and the racist attitudes spewed against them throughout Western Europe between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Pagden shows the uncertainty with which early-modern Europeans handled their thoughts of the "other" in the New World. Cañizares-Esguerra touches on the fascinating topic of how early-modern European views held the belief that demons and other outside forces, had the power to change an individual's body, thereby affecting their descendants to the third and fourth generations. Among several biblical narratives in Genesis, this view was based on an interpretation of Noah's curse of Ham's descendants. Upon arrival to the Americas, Europeans began to relax this view and turned to a less sophisticated view on race.

This publication deserves a serious consideration and perusal if one is to speak on the matter of race. In the reviewer's opinion, the editors have taken the initiative in addressing a sensitive societal issue from a historical perspective, providing readers with a scholarly and effective resource in understanding the origins of racial ideology in the West. Though non-exhaustive, the essays stir the reader to investigate the germination and dissemination of an ideology currently dividing modern society. Ministers and seminarians are invited to devour this work if they intend to make a positive difference in the conversation on race.

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15 Ibid., 252.

16 Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, "Religion and race: Protestant and catholic discourses on Jewish conversions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries", 266.

17 Ibid.

Biblical Prophecy: Perspectives For Christian Theology, Discipleship, and Ministry

This is a review of Ellen F. Davis' book for the Interpretation Series. It gives an overview of the book with a small amount of analysis and reasons I find the book to be effective.

Danielle Estelle Ramsay

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Davis, Ellen F. *Biblical Prophecy: Perspectives For Christian Theology, Discipleship, and Ministry.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014

Interpretation Series, Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church

$40.00
ISBN: 978-0-664-23538-3

The Bible is, by and large, shaped prophetically. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the practice of prophecy is prevalent. Through prophecy, God's people are encouraged, challenged, reprimanded, and exhorted throughout different stories, locations, and times. Yet the modern Protestant church often gives little heed to the contemporary practice of prophecy, or even theological reflection upon ancient prophecies in the Bible. Ellen F. Davis explores the notion of prophecy within the Bible, reflecting on its importance in its particular locale, but turning to reflect on what relevance it has for the modern church.

The book is formatted thematically, rather than chronologically. She opens the book with an introductory chapter on the prophetic role as understood by the biblical authors. She maintains a clear definition of what makes a prophetic as her paradigm for the rest of the book: "The prophetic role in this and every time is speaking truth to power."[18] With this understanding in mind, the book is then a collection of thematic essays, none specifically contingent upon another. The essays deal with a variety of subjects relating to prophecy, from the personal nature of the relationship between prophets and God, to a corrected view of the created order when seen through an exegesis of prophetic Scripture, to a dialogue on how interfaith conversation between Islam and Judaism has deepened, her understanding of prophecy and sharpened her ability to exegete the prophetic Scriptures, as well as many other pertinent topics. Each essay contains reflections on the lives or writings of individual prophets throughout Scripture, including Moses, Jeremiah, Elijah, and the gospel writer Matthew, along with many others.

With such an array of material, the book is broad in scope, but each essay is detailed and well-organized, to treat a particular issue thoughtfully, thoroughly, and effectively. Different as they are, each chapter works in concert to affirm a biblical understanding of prophecy, and to call our attention to the importance of prophecy in the life of today's church.

Davis' book is meant to be used in the sphere of the church, as a resource for pastors who wish to engage prophetic literature throughout

18 Ellen F. Davis, Biblical Prophecy: Perspectives For Christian Theology, Discipleship, and Ministry. (Louiseville: John Knox Press, 2014), 1.

the Bible to grow their congregations in discipleship. The exegetical nature of her approach keeps the book thoroughly grounded in Scripture, which is quoted at length on almost every page. She does not, however, refrain from calling attention to the ways in which the modern, particularly Western, church neglects a proper treatment of the way prophecy can speak into its life. Davis broadens the church's understanding of the prophetic office, and calls the church to be alert and attentive to the ways the spirit of God is moving prophetically in our world today, through our Scriptures and in our congregations. The book is a poignant and excellent resource, for scholarship and homiletics alike.

SHORT STORY

Pittsburgh
Theological
Journal

SPRING 2015

A Desperate but Necessary Transfer of Control: A Short Story About My Experience With Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

This is an autobiographical reflection on my experience with OCD. It focuses on my major "breakdown" in 1984-85, including flashbacks to the past inserted in the tracing of that year. The 1000 word introduction to the story includes: (1) a description of OCD, comparing the DSM IV definition with the current DSM V description; (2) the scientific and theological concerns involved; (3) the relevance of Logstrup, Vanier, and Pieris, developing a harmonized understanding of the "Ethical Demand"; and (4) how 2nd person neuroscience may inform healing, applying the new insights of this field.

S. Scott Mapes

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Introduction and Background

When I first consulted a clinical psychologist for treatment and care, my diagnosis was General Anxiety Disorder (GAD). After subsequent periods of relapse and therapy over the years, it was determined that I suffered due to Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

What is Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder? According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (*DSM IV-TR) guidelines, the following are the key elements in OCD:

1. The presence of either obsessions (disturbing thoughts, impulses, or images) or compulsions (repetitive behaviors in response to the obsessions).

2. The person has recognized that the obsessions or compulsions are excessive or unreasonable but still suffers from them.

3. The obsessions or compulsions cause marked distress, are time consuming (more than 1 hour a day), or significantly interfere with the person's normal routine.

4. In the presence of another Axis I disorder, the content and experience of the obsessions or compulsions are not restricted to it (for example, Trichotillomania).

5. The disturbance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance.

With the release of DSM V (235-65), there is now a new chapter on Obsessive-Compulsive and related disorders, including Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD), and Trichotillomania (TTM, the hair-pulling disorder), as well as two new disorders: hoarding disorder and excoriation (skin-picking) disorder. This new division in the DSM reflects both the recognition of an obsessive-compulsive spectrum of disorders as well as the uniqueness of these disorders.

The standard treatment of OCD typically includes a combination of therapy, especially Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and medication.

Psychiatrist Ian Osborn has given a concise summary of three therapeutic approaches that have been used, with the first two making up the components of CBT:

1. Behavior therapy – Developed by Victor Molpe and Joseph Wolpe, the patient is exposed to the fearful thoughts while minimizing the compulsive response (Osborn 2008, 130-33).

2. Cognitive therapy – Developed by Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis, the patient is helped to identify the disturbing thoughts and to change the way that the thoughts are seen (Osborn 2008, 133-37).

3. Responsibility Modification Therapy (RMT) – Developed by Paul Salkovskis, Patricia Van Oppen, and Mark Freeston, the focus here is on identifying and transforming deep beliefs involving feelings of personal responsibility (Osborn 2008, 142-44).

The major underlying cognitive problem addressed in these therapies is the OCD tendency to engage in Thought-Action Fusion (TAF), which is "the propensity to inappropriately assume causal associations between one's thoughts and the external reality" with the thoughts viewed as being the same as committing the actions (TAF-morality) or with the thoughts viewed as more likely leading to the actions (TAF-likelihood) (Williams, Lau, and Grisham 2013, 207-08).

The primary medication therapy for OCD is the group of drugs known as the Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), which includes Anafranil, Prozac, Luvox, Zoloft, Paxil, Celexa, and Lexapro. Add-on medications could include the second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs) and Depakote. Long-term medication therapy is often needed (Preston, O'Neal, and Talaga, 117-121).

The spiritual dimension of healing for OCD has received increasing attention in the last several decades. One important emphasis in this area has come from Ian Osborn's work, in which he focused on the unconditional transferring of all responsibility to God, using as examples the lives of Martin Luther, John Bunyan, and Ste. Therese Martin de Lisieux (Osborn 2008, 45-108). This approach has been very helpful in my healing.

Another spiritual and therapeutic emphasis that is receiving growing attention is Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). This therapy developed during the 1990s out of the idea of mindfulness, defined as "a state of consciousness that is characterized by the self-regulation of attention towards present moment experiences coupled with an accepting, non-judgemental stance towards these experiences" (Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, et. al., 2004, 230-241). Several of the scholars I have studied have offered insights to clarify what mindfulness entails:

1. Aloysius Pieris – There are "two shades of meaning in the notion of mindfulness, namely recollection and recognition" (Pieris 2010, 43). In recollection, we recall God's activity in the past—including Creation—and remember that God has been mindful of us. In recognition, we are mindful of the presence of this same God at work in our lives in the present. It is a two-way mindfulness, therefore, that we experience with God.

2. Jean Vanier – According to him, "the message of the Gospel is that each one of us has a gift to give; each one is precious; each one needs to be loved and to belong" (2005, 11). Hence, there is no genuine mindfulness of God without a deep and caring mindfulness to one another. On the other hand, this mindfulness is also two-way, for "We cannot be totally secure for everything; we must discover inside ourselves this power that we have been given to receive the Holy Spirit, not alone but with others in community" (2005, 27).

3. Knud Logstrup – In relating mindfulness to one's relationships with others, Logstrup's concept of the "ethical demand" clarifies what it means to truly care for others. In essence, the demand is a silent one from the other person for love, not for indulgence (1971, 21-23). This demand is radical because ". . . in the very nature of the case no one but he alone, through his unselfishness, is able to discover what will best serve the other person" (1971, 46). This is not natural love, because in its various forms of being "dispassionate, passionate, or sentimental," natural love derives from the self (1971, 139). It is instead the reality that one's life has been given as a gift, both to God and to others (1971, 165).

In my life's struggle with OCD, I see the disorder as mindfulness turned in an excessively inward fashion. Because relationships with others, and the perspectives of others, are ignored or minimized, a solipsistic reality is created that becomes ego dystonic, i.e., harmful to the self. Through a second person neuroscience perspective, which is "a narrative of meanings that are most closely understood, and likely forged, in the close meeting of two or more persons" (Spezio 2014, 40), a person can truly understand who they are and what they are to become. This is never achieved in isolation, but it occurs only in "life together," or the *koinonia* life shared in the body of Christ.

I. The Madness, the Doctor, and the Meds

January 1985

I picked up the box of crazy pills and read the words on the small package.

Mellaril was the brand name, I guessed from what I read. Thioridizine must be the chemical name. According to the fine print, this was an antipsychotic drug that was used to treat schizophrenia and general psychosis. No wonder Dr. Miller thought that I should spend some time in the psychiatric unit.

"Quit reading the fine print and take the medicine," my wife Faith called out.

And the voice in my brain whispered, *Take it, before you do something horrible and wicked.* I shakily got some water and took my first Mellaril.

Within an hour a feeling of calm and peace began to spread through my body . . .

Winter 1966

"Mommy! Daddy!" I had suddenly woken up from terrors that I could not describe. My parents came running as my cries became shrieks. A cold shiver raced up my back.

"What's the matter, Scotty?" my mother anxiously whispered.

"I don't know!" The feeling of fear was like a bundle of needles on my skin, a herd of ghosts streaming down from the attic and up from the basement, a racing of craziness in my brain.

In an hour, I was worn out and safely asleep in my room.

January 1985

As the swirling in my brain quieted, I thought about the day that my wife and I had just survived. As I had worked at the office, my tears and sadness only grew. My agitation seemed uncontrollable. Finally , we drove the three miles to our family practice doctor, Dr. Debra Miller.

I was not crazy about seeing a woman doctor at first, but Faith and I both liked her. Her manner was gentle and compassionate, therefore I knew in my heart that she would understand. Yet, as she performed the examination that night, she seemed a bit anxious herself. But then, what would I do if someone came to me saying that they feared violently hurting someone?

Winter 1969

I hate going to the doctor, I inwardly whined in Dr. Houston's waiting room. I caught the flu every other month or so, and every time the doctor visit ended with a shot of penicillin in my buttocks. Why there? I wondered.

But I am afraid of the needle! My mom tried to get me to settle down as we waited, but the harder I tried not thinking about the needle, the more I did. What was worse, the needle I remembered was always bigger than the needle I saw in the doctor's hands. Oh, no. I was next . . .

January 1985

The physical exam was over, and Dr. Miller had good news: There was nothing wrong with my body. *That's right*, the voice whispered. *It's all in your head, and you cannot do anything about it.* I ignored the voice and, through the tears, tried to focus on the doctor's words.

"Do you think that you need to spend some time in the psychiatric

unit?" she asked.

"No, I can't do that!" I protested. "I'm in a graduate program, and I have a job. I won't go to the hospital." Suddenly I was stubbornly determined to avoid the hospital at all costs.

"Then you ought to meet with our psychologist, Dr. Jack Hewitt," Dr. Miller insisted. "We can put you on some meds, but Dr. Hewitt will help you figure out what's going on in your mind."

In desperation, I agreed. It would be so much easier to be physically sick.

Summer 1970

"My head hurts. I think I have meningitis!" I screamed at my mom. It was going to be just like that eleven-year-old girl outside of town. She got sick with meningitis and was dead before the day ended. "You will be dead soon, too," a voice inside my mind said. "You're going to hurt really badly, and then you'll be gone."

My mom was getting tired of my problems, I could tell. She looked my way and wearily said, "Scott, stop it! You are fine."

January 1985

The day had come to an end. Faith and I had visited Dr. Miller, who declared me physically fit but in need of some mental repair. And, of course, I had taken my first Mellaril and experienced the calmness it brought. I just wanted to enjoy the peace and quiet in my brain.

What a contrast it was to the nightmare of the last few months! My stress levels had been through the roof. I did not allow my mind to slow down, in spite of warnings from others. What was the reward for all this self-imposed pressure? It was depression, muscle strain, and a brain that could not escape the nightmares it had manufactured.

Maybe this is due to genetics and just runs in my family . . .

Summer 1972

Mom had been all day sick. We three kids were very worried about

her. Although I was just twelve, I often babysat my younger siblings, so things did not seem that unusual during the daylight hours. After the sun had set, we were slowly getting more worried.

It was well after dark that Dad came home. Without a word to us, he went upstairs, picked up Mom, and carried her out to get her to the hospital. She had nearly died, and we were shell-shocked. How could I have missed this?

II. The Psychologist, the Secret, and the Cure

January 1985

Dr. Jack Hewitt, my psychologist, was a tall, overweight, and disheveled middle-aged man. He was not like Sigmund Freud at all! After a casual greeting, we got down to business.

Dr. Hewitt listened patiently as I choked out the story about my previous "breakdowns," my uncontrollable emotions, my physical stress, and my violent thoughts targeting both people I loved and people I did not know. The doctor nodded knowingly at every detail I shared with him.

"I think we can help you get through this awful stuff, Scott," Dr. Hewitt declared. "But you think too much. That is part of the problem. So we are going to do a lot without you knowing what we are doing." My initial diagnosis was written on the checkout form: "Generalized Anxiety Disorder."

January 1974

We had a listening room at our experimental high school, and I loved going there to get high on rock music. The "Quadrophenia" album by the Who had just come out, and my mind soaked in the lyrics to "The Real Me":

I went to my mother. I said, "I'm crazy. Can't you see?"

She said, "I know how you feel, son. It runs in the family."

Can you see the real me, can ya?"

The story of my life, I whispered to myself as I played air guitar and relaxed.

February 1985

"Show me what you are afraid you might do with these scissors." Dr. Hewitt held out the pair of plastic-handled blades to me.

He must be crazy, I mused. *Doesn't he know that these thoughts are strong and that they might overpower me at any moment?!* Nevertheless, he insisted, and so I reached out my hands to grab the scissors and get this over with.

No! The voice inside protested. *What are you doing? You'll kill everybody in the whole place.* Ignoring the screams inside, however, my fingers touched the handle. There was a sudden silence in my mind.

"Well?" Dr. Hewitt asked. "Aren't you going to hurt me?" I shook my head sideways as he laughed and declared, "Boy, am I relieved!"

So was I. My brain couldn't make me do anything.

May 1974

Darla was a cute sixteen-year-old girl, and I was hanging out with her. So what if it was a youth rally at a Methodist church? My bad boy reputation could resist any tricks they might try to pull.

And of all the teens that could have shared their testimony, they had picked out a twelve-year-old kid wearing a suit. What could he possibly say that would mean anything to me?

Yet this guy had a real relationship with Jesus. As I listened, I wanted what he had. Soon I found myself praying.

March 1985

"There is a gap between what you think and what you do." Dr. Hewitt was picking up where we had left off. "I know that Jesus seemed to say that having thoughts in your head is just as bad as acting out those thoughts, but I'm telling you that thinking things and doing those things

are very different."

Who is he to lecture you about Christianity? The voice in my head continued. *He has been overly influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis.* But I knew in my heart that the voice was wrong.

"With your permission, we are going to do another game," Hewitt continued. "On this piece of paper, I have written down what I would say if I had your problem. I want you to try to guess what I have written on it."

Could this be the secret that I have been hoping to find?

September 1974

This was the kind of party I loved to be a part of. I was wrapped up in the arms of an attractive girl who had just taught me the art of French kissing. And that was all that we did. With the Bread song "I Want to Make It withYou" playing, we made out. I didn't want this night to end.

Actually, I wanted to forget about life's pressures. I was tired of being the first-born son, the good boy, and the smart kid at school. This girl thought that I was sexy, and I loved her back because of what she offered me. This was what I wanted!

April 1985

I was bawling my eyes out again. *This is proof that you are not getting better!* The voice inside taunted me. But now I was crying harder, because I had not figured out what was on that piece of paper. My guesses were not even close. I had not solved the puzzle: "What would my psychologist say if he had my problem?"

Finally, at this session, Dr. Hewitt decided to end the suspense. "I've made you suffer long enough. Read it." Without hesitation, I unveiled the secret. I read a brief message: "So what?" This was not what I expected, but it made more sense than anything else I had considered to that point.

October 1974

"Babs" was a relative who lived nearby. She had come over to visit our family, and, she had come with a mission. My parents were worried about my walk with God, so they called Babs the Baptist.

I was listening to my music in my room when Babs came barging in. "What are you doing, Scotty?" she demanded. "You're making bad choices, and the people that love you are quite concerned. Don't you want to get things right with God again?"

While angry with her, I prayed with her straightway.

III. Ruminations about Suicide and Death

April 1985

So if you've said "So what?" to these strange thoughts, why are they still in your brain? I had no good answer. As I continued driving on the beltway around Kansas City, one idea pulsed through my head: *You are going to kill yourself today.*

To my right was a concrete wall—the type of barrier that is a staple of suburban architecture. *That is the wall you are going to crash against.* This impulse pushed me to the edge. "No!" I screamed as the tears forced their way out of my eyes. "I will not kill myself!"

I was to meet my wife Faith for lunch on the Kansas side. My only goal was to get there in one piece. Soon I was beside her, telling her my tale and gulping down my lunch.

June 1975

"Are you willing to give your life for the sake of God's Kingdom?" the preacher asked the one hundred Nazarene teens gathered at camp. "Will you spend your days serving yourself, or will you serve the Lord? Maybe God is calling you to full-time ministry."

There was this dream that I had in which I was sharing about Jesus with other young people in a city. As my friends made their way to the front to say "Yes" to God's call, I joined them. We sang, "Where He leads me,

I will follow. I'll go with Him all the way."

May 1985

Fred was my boss and my friend. We met once a week to pray together in his office. Through our first year and a half of co-laboring, our prayers focused upon Bible quizzing in the church and our lives and families. During 1985, I provided a new set of prayer requests.

"How are you doing, Scott?" I knew he was sincere in his concern. That meant more to me than I could express, so I often sobbed my way through the prayer times.

I don't think that Fred totally understood what I was going through, but he did not have to experience what I did to be a Christ-like source of encouragement.

June 1977

My home church had a new pastor now. I knew that I would the McGareys deeply—especially their three kids. There was, however, something about the new pastor and his wife that I liked as well.

Pastor Smith had encouraged the church board to grant me my first local preacher's license. So now I was an official preacher, and my call to ministry was recognized. I was proud, not just of the title, but of what I was becoming. I hoped that my feelings about being a pastor would never change!

May 1985

It was the weekend of the district Caravan Round-Up—a Christian scouting competition in which the local church groups from the Kansas and Missouri sides competed against each other in various competitions. As the district director for Caravan, I was in charge of this annual event.

To make the experience less stressful for Faith and I, we chose to stay in a hotel room near the host church. Usually this would have been a wonderful treat, but I was terrified of one particular thing. Dr. Hewitt challenged me to carry a pocket knife around with me to prove that

I was not in danger of hurting anyone. As we went to the hotel room Friday night, the voice whispered, *It is going to be in the papers. You're going to kill your wife, then yourself, with that knife.* Surprisingly, even though the voice chattered throughout the night, I felt in my heart that we were in no real danger.

June 1978

I had made it through high school! Even more, I had won many of the academic awards in my class. But the best part of all was that my four years of college would be paid for.

I knew very little about the Norton Simon, Inc., Foundation for Education or the Glass Bottle Blowers' Association, but these two organizations would be parting with $20,000 to prepare me to change the world.

May 1985

I was sick and tired of being sick and mentally ill. As I sat and thought about my friends and coworkers, the voice inside taunted me: *You are such a mess! No one you know is as strange as you are!*

My best friend Paul and his wife Val had not had an easy life, but they were quite happy and normal. My buddy Don at the office was just plain fun to be around. I never saw him sitting around at his desk bawling his eyes out.

The list of normal people I knew was endless. No one lived the life of mental turmoil that I lived. No one understood my pain. Maybe it was time for drastic measures. I should get off of the medication to force myself to become normal.

August 1978

I was tired of being a "brainiac." Throughout high school, I had never played a sport—although I had tried track and field and had dropped out twice. If there was any sport that I had a chance of playing in college, however, there was only one that made any sense: cross country. I was sure with practice I could learn to run the long distances that college competitions required.

Even though a few of my friends laughed at the idea, I would try it.

IV. An Ill-Timed Act of "Faith"

May 1985

"I'm doing much better, Dr. Hewitt. I need to get off my medications."

He examined me carefully. "Don't you think this might be premature? When are you finishing your seminary studies?"

"I am finishing them in December, but I am doing better. You have helped me a lot. And I realize that no one is in any danger because of me."

Dr. Hewitt nodded. "That is true. Just remember that these crazy thoughts, as you call them, can be a smokescreen for real-life emotions related to problems that you need to deal with. We can try to wean you off the Mellaril and see how it goes."

Inwardly I smiled. I knew that it would not be long until I was back to normal.

September 1978

Mom and Dad stood by our brown Volkswagen Rabbit as we said goodbye. They had taken me up to Boston for my first semester of college. And this was a very difficult thing for them to do.

Sure, I loved my family, but I needed to be on my own. My past was holding me back. Here in New England, five hundred miles away from my old life, I could have a fresh start with people who know nothing about my past. I'm sure that my brain can heal in this new place.

June 1985

Faith and I loved having Uncle Bob and Aunt Donna stop by. They were on their way home to Texas after visiting family in the east, and Kansas City was a logical stopping off point. Like many of our relatives did, they paid for dinner out and then decided that a cruise on the Missouri River would be fun.

As we got on the boat, however, I began to hear the voice within. *You're going on a boat? You might go nuts and push someone into the river.*

The harder I tried to silence the voice, the more steam it gathered. *Are your hands safely away from others so that you do not strangle them?* What should have been an amazing night had become a nightmare for me.

My attention was still too much on controlling that inner tormenter. Where was my concern for others? Why couldn't I just live in the moment?

February 1979

The hall was quiet as I was lying on my bed. To this point my life had been much better in college. I had a great first season in cross country and was chaplain of the traveling choir. My roommate Paul and I had become best friends. It felt wonderful to be calmer.

Yet on some nights, the weird feelings still came—like they had tonight. I had some tricks, though. Sleep on your left side. Listen to music. Think happy thoughts . . .

June 1985

The last summer course in my master's program was "Theology of the Holy Spirit" with Dr. Rob Staples. I was the assistant for Dr. J. Kenneth Grider, but I also appreciated Dr. Staples. Summer classes were usually difficult under "normal" circumstances, but my mental health had been steadily declining since weaning off of the Mellaril. I was not functioning well.

Today was our first exam in the course, and as I received my blue book and got out a pencil, I heard a familiar voice whisper, *You are going to stab yourself with that pencil.* The picture of me stabbing myself with the pencil lingered for several minutes.

Finally I'd had enough. First came anger at myself, and after that there was a determination to get well.

November 1980

I had just experienced one of the greatest accomplishments of my life. Our cross country team was one of two teams representing New

England at the National Christian College Cross Country meet, and we had placed eighth out of all the Christian schools in the nation. As we made the trip home from Ohio, I shared the sense of jubilation with my teammates.

Riding in the van, however, I reminded myself of a greater joy and priority in my life: An attractive and intelligent young woman named Faith.

June 1985

I sat before Dr. Hewitt in his office. As my tears spilled out, I felt weak, humbled, and ashamed.

He started out the conversation. "Why were you in such a hurry to prove that everything was OK when it was not? All that you did was put yourself through some tough weeks."

"I know. I'm so sorry."

"No apologies are necessary." Dr. Hewitt paused. "You will need to go back on the medication. In fact, you may need to always be on medication. Once again, what do we say about that?"

I smiled faintly. "So what?"

"That's exactly right! Now, Scott, you must open up your mind, your heart, and your life to others. You're learning how to live life, not how to perform."

June 1982

Faith and I were exhausted from the past year and six months: Engagement, Faith's move to Boston, plans for our wedding, and graduation from college. We were tired and burned out from putting forth 110% in our studies and our college jobs. I was also frightened that I would not know how to be a good husband.

When Faith appeared at the back of the church sanctuary, however, I knew in my heart that we were making the right decision. She looked absolutely beautiful! So in spite of my anxieties, I would marry this girl, and we would begin to build a wonderful relationship and serve the Lord.

V. The Stretching of Comfort Zones

June 1985

It was a three-hour flight to Los Angeles, where the Nazarene General Assembly would take place. As we stretched our legs and touched hands, I breathed a prayer of thanks for the peace I had in my heart and mind. It felt great to be back on the medicine, but it felt even better to know that I did not have to fight that voice inside. I expected to have some strange mental wrangling as we did our work in LA, but I knew that once again I would be able to enjoy traveling.

Once we got to our hotel, we kept some of the Sunday School convention materials in our room. These materials included some box cutters. *Box cutters! Those could be very dangerous.* As the week wore on, however, I thought less about the box cutters as I focused more on the incredible events that Faith and I shared.

June 1982

We were on a paddle boat in the middle of Lake Damariscotta in Maine, and finally a sense of relaxation overtook us. Our honeymoon had been less than relaxing to this point: Spoiled milk in the spare tire storage area, a flat tire in Scranton, spiders in our cabin, and a suicide in the cottage next to ours. But finally we were able to slow down our minds and focus on the wonders of the "north country."

The strange thoughts, however, had still been in my mind. Why would they be here now? Don't I love my new bride?

July 1985

During our second journey of the summer, Faith and I planned to enjoy a classic road trip, traveling east with stops in Illinois for the World Bible Quiz Finals and in Pennsylvania to see family and to serve as evangelists at a children's camp. We were wrapping up our first stop in Greenville with a trip to the nearby lake.

As we walked on top of a small ridge overlooking the waters, my stream of anxious thoughts was suddenly interrupted by motion surrounding us.

The wind! On this warm summer's day, the breeze blew in a persistent torrent of refreshment.

In the depths of my being I heard another Voice whisper: *The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.* It was Jesus! Every time that I felt the wind from now on, I would think of Him.

July 1982

The road trip of our lives had finally come. As we headed west to Kansas City, my brother-in-law Paul and "cousin-in-law" Jeff traveled in a pick-up with a small U-Haul trailer in tow, and Faith and I followed behind in a 1974 Mercury Comet which we had purchased for $1,100.

Our stop after the first day's drive was a motel in Illinois, and after a relaxing swim, we headed to our rooms. Normally I would have fallen right to sleep, but the stresses of the previous months had tested our self-confidence, and all that we could do was cry in each other's arms.

August 1985

With only a few weeks left in the summer, we arrived home to a Sunday School division meeting with our new responsible General Superintendent, Dr. Raymond Hurn. Just as I was becoming more aware of God's presence every day, I was also appreciating other people more. Up to this point, I had thought that Dr. Hurn was just a boring bureaucrat. But as Dr. Hurn spoke about his passion for outreach, I realized that his years in the Church Growth division were not wasted. He would be a wonderful leader.

How many other people had I taken for granted during my years at the seminary? One would be Dr. Grider, my major professor at the seminary. More than any other teacher at the school, he believed in me. My mental struggles had not changed his opinion.

August 1992

It had been scary for a few weeks. Job hunting in a big city is not easy!

Finally, Faith and I had found jobs. My work would likely be temporary: doing data processing at a local bank. Thankfully, Faith's job was full-time and a bit more dependable. She would be working as the editorial secretary at Nazarene Headquarters in the Sunday School division. I thought that we could make it now.

But would we make it? Could I keep my sanity and complete a master's degree? Will our marriage still be strong in three years?

VI. The Hope Fulfilled

September 1985

"You are doing very well, Scott. I think that now is the time to wean you off of the medication." Dr. Hewitt could have hit me on the head with a paper weight and not shocked me more.

"Do you mean starting right now? But I have only been back on it for three months!"

"You will be moving in a few months, and with the real progress you have made, I think that you can do it. We will cut you back to 25 milligrams twice a day instead of three times a day. You will do that for a month, and then you will cut back to one nighttime dose. A month after that, you will be done with Mellaril."

Surely it could not be that simple . . .

As the weeks went on, I could see the evidence of my recovery on a daily basis. There were still some weird thoughts that popped into my brain, and there were still real fears about the future: cancer, my career, and the challenges of preaching sermons and leading congregations. Nevertheless, the strength and peace I gained from the people in my life would be a real means of grace.

What irony! I had been a Christian for eleven years, and only now did I really understand what it meant to trust in the Lord and to walk with Him daily. Could it be that it took me so long to transfer the control of my life to Jesus?

October 1985

The Second Chapter of Acts was going to be in concert in Kansas City, Kansas, and we decided that this would be a great date night. On the afternoon before the concert, I had a brief relapse of obsessive thoughts related to losing my mind and committing violent deeds. While I initially panicked, my determination to hear the Second Chapter overrode that reaction.

The group was at their best that night, but more than the music, the presence of God was very real. When the invitation was given for prayers of healing, I stood and allowed the love of the Lord and His people wash over me.

November 1985

My school days were numbered—at least for the immediate future. In just a few weeks we would be moving back east to be within three hours of our families, to lead youth ministry in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. Our visit to Greene County was an incredible experience, as we fell in love with the hills and valleys—and the people. All was set for the move.

It was bedtime, so I took my daily dose of Mellaril. In another week I would be done with medication for now. I didn't want to believe Dr. Hewitt when he told me that I might need medication again, but I knew that whether I ever took pills again or not was not an important issue. What mattered was that my focus had gotten away from the junk in my brain to the life and people with which I was blessed.

"Why didn't you tell me what was going on?" My best friend Paul quizzed me as we played racquetball.

"I don't know. I guess I was embarrassed. I am sorry. I should have told you sooner."

"That's OK. Just remember that you do not have to be perfect to be a good friend. In fact, we're all quite relieved to discover that you are a real human being. I had my doubts!" Paul laughed loudly.

I smiled and laughed as well. There was no reason why I shouldn't.

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IN MEMORIAM

Pittsburgh
Theological
Journal

SPRING 2015

PITTSBURGH
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

In Memoriam

The Rev. Dr. Johannes G. J. Swart

Oct. 27, 1962 - Sept. 8, 2014

Associate Professor of World Mission and Evangelism at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary 2013-2014

Brendan Ashley, M. Div. Middler:
Spoken at a Service of Dedication of memorial benches on May 14, 2015 at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

I am very honored and privileged to be with you all today. We are here to remember our dear friend, mentor, colleague, and family member Jannie Swart. We are here to celebrate all the ways he had an impact on our world, our community and each one of us. I have thought about him almost every day since he died. Now, it is difficult when there are moments when I realize that he is not there to have a conversation about life, faith, mission, and what God is "up to". I cry out to God, lamenting that my friend and mentor is not gracing the halls and classrooms of PTS, bringing peace to everyone of us, through his radiant smile, an affectionate hand shake, and a warm blessing to have a great day!

There is one memory that lingers with me, and that is the practice of dwelling in the word, the one we just participated in. In every class I had with him, this was central to the way he formed and discipled me. I often recall him saying, "Now, let us gather for dwelling in the word." Jannie was teaching us how to listen each other into free speech. In a world that is messy and very noisy, it is difficult for the church to listen and identify where the Triune God of mission is at work. This practice afforded me and many other students the opportunity to believe that mission is not "me" centered, but God centered! And we are all called to be detectives of divinity, searching for the clues of God's movement and action in the world. Jannie embodied God's mission. It was a part of his very being. If you encountered Jannie you experienced God's mission. He exemplified the person of peace that Luke 10 speaks of to everyone that he met.

I remember walking into his office once in a panic about my future in mission work. How was God going to use a guy like me, when I did not feel ready or equipped? Jannie sat there with a smile, and acknowledged my feelings. He never dismissed them as stupid, because he listened me into free speech. He reminded me to trust in God's call. He reminded me of the importance that God is at work even when things are unclear or messy. As I go out into the world, looking for how the Triune God is at work, I cling to my formative time spent with

Jannie. Even though he was with us for a short time, his witness will remain, because Jannie never stopped embodying the mission of God. He lived it everyday and I hope that wherever God may call us, that we might also go and be a person of peace, listening every person we meet into free speech!

The Rev. Chris Brown
Church Planting Initiative Coordinator at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary:

My first encounter with Jannie was the day he approached me at the New Wilmington Mission Conference in 2013 and said, "We have to teach a church planting class together." Jannie drew people into relationships in such a way that we couldn't help but be implicated in whatever he was doing. Soon three other friends and colleagues had joined us and we planned a course called "Planting and Leading New Churches."

Anyone who met Jannie felt as though they had made a new close friend. For me, Jannie was a friend, but also a colleague. We co-led the Church Planting Initiative at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and served on Pittsburgh Presbytery's New Church Development Commission together. We only worked with each other formally for less than a year, but I am forever thankful for the time I spent laboring under his guidance.

The secret behind Jannie's influence was revealed during the memorial service at the church which he had pastored in Oil City, PA. Friends, parishioners, and colleagues all shared testimonies about the love, joy, and zeal which marked Jannie's ministry. But one person recalled having once asked Jannie why he gave himself with such devotion to his ministry. Jannie's response: "I really believe this stuff!"

He really believed this stuff. That Christ's death and resurrection had conquered sin and death. That the Gospel called us to be reconciled not just to God, but also to one another. That the two greatest commandments truly and simply are to love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. He really believed this stuff.

And he didn't just believe it in sermons or books. Jannie believed it in ordinary conversation and daily life. That's what set Jannie apart. Many of us in the Church believe this stuff when we're preaching or writing or counseling. But Jannie believed it every minute of every day. Every word he spoke radiated confidence that God was alive and active in the present moment. He spoke and lived with an awareness of the reality of God, not just when he was teaching, but when he was sharing a beer with you, or receiving your hospitality, or spontaneously stopping by your office to say hello and share his joy.

Jannie called us to live in this spirit of true belief when he preached at the PC(USA)'s Evangelism and Church Growth Conference a month before he died. His sermon there was recalled many times in days after his passing because of his exhortation to laugh at death. I remember the very beginning of the sermon, though: He began by running up to the baptismal font and asking if we really believed that Jesus Christ is living water. If we really believed that fullness of life is to be found in relationship with Jesus, our hearts would be overflowing with desire to share that love with the world (John 7:38). This is the gift I received in Jannie Swart: a friend and colleague who knew the love of God in the depths of his being, and from whose heart flowed streams of living water. Thanks be to God for a man who really believed this stuff.

Garrett Yates, M. Div. Senior
Spoken at a Service of Dedication of memorial benches on May 14, 2015 at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

One of the books that Jannie and I loved to talk about was Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Without going into too much detail of the book, there is one thing in particular that I think captures so much of who Jannie was to me. One of the things that *Being and Time* tells us, that Jannie loved to point out, is that to be human is to be "thrown" in time; a way of saying that to be human is to be a contingent and time-bound creature. And so, as it goes, the most precious gift that any of us has is our time. For we are all really the total number of seconds that make up our days, which contribute to our years, which in turn make up the lineaments of our lives. And, as Heidegger was so good at telling us, each second may be our last, hence his book's message: make the most of your time.

Jannie was someone who made the most of his time. But I don't mean this in the sense that he always had to be doing something important or career-advancing. Far from it. Jannie loved to be with people – be it a board-member or a tired and unwieldy MS02 class. Jannie cared about us here at PTS, no matter who we were, and no matter what we were doing – we could be talking theology, planning a school vision statement, or playing frisbee. One of the reasons Jannie may not have published like he was certainly capable of is because he just couldn't pass up a conversation. He had time for people.

I can still remember dashing down to his office at the end of 2nd floor McNaugher, the latest bit of theology like a hot coal on my tongue, and I just had to hash it out with Jannie. I'd get down there, and he would usually have his hands propping up his head, glasses off, either reading student blog posts or perhaps crafting one of his amazing power-points for class. And there would be that split second when I'd despair that he was too busy for me. But it never failed, he'd look up from the computer and before I could tell him that'd I'd come back later he would be channeling me over to the corner where his chairs were. "I have a meeting with the Dean in 5 minutes," he'd say, "but what's up?" Jannie made time for us.

And I guess one of the reasons Jannie had so much time to offer so many of us is because he knew the secret of time: Jannie knew that time is a gift. I'll never forget the text Jannie sent me when Katie and I found out that she would able to move to Pittsburgh and work here at PTS. The text probably witnesses to his life about as well as anything I know. Six short words: "It's all about the gift, man." It's all about the gift: the gift of a good pint of beer at Sharp Edge, the gift of friendship with colleagues, the gift of racial reconciliation in one's home country, the gift of wife and kids, and the gift of time itself. It still hurts for so many of us to have lost Jannie so soon, but it's my prayer that as we continue to heal, and as we continue to share our pain with our friends, that we would find ourselves doing what Jannie was so good at: looking to the God who our friend taught us is a boundless exchange of gift, and finding the words of thanks for him rising from the depths.

May light perpetual shine on you, Jannie.

Submission Information

General Guidelines:

Entry: Send all submissions to journal@pts.edu as an attachment using Microsoft Word file format. Attach images and graphs, charts and lists as separate .jpg or .pdf files.

Title page: Be sure to include a title page with the following information: name, title of article, abstract (50-100 words), e-mail address, and phone number. Give a one sentence autobiography including (but not limited to) your name, academic title or position, institutional affiliation and location.

Originality: All work must be original and not previously published.

Formatting Principles:

- Adhere to the guidelines of the Kate L. Turabian's Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (6th rev. ed., 1996). See the PTS Student Handbook for details.
- Include both footnotes and a bibliography.
- For biblical languages, use fonts provided by the Society of Biblical Literature only.
- Page format: 1 inch margins, double-spaced, Times New Roman, font size 12.
- Use gender inclusive language.
- Do not include your name anywhere other than on the title page.
- Do not exceed the maximum word count as defined below.

Selection Process:

All pieces will be judged by a student editorial board. Editors may require minor changes before publication. No submission is guaranteed publication. Individuals may submit up to three unique pieces, but generally only one submission per person is accepted.

Types of Submissions:

- Research Articles can be up to 8000 words in length. Areas of special interest include archaeology and history of antiquity, biblical studies, church history, ethics, missiology, pastoral care, and theology.
- Pastoral and educational reflections can be up to 5000 words in length. Pastors and educators contemplate the theory, practice, and experience of their work.
- Sermons can be up to 3500 words in length. Include the date and location where the sermon was preached.
- Dissertation and Thesis Abstracts can be up to 1000 words in length. Include the name of faculty member(s) overseeing the dissertation.
- Book Reviews can be up to 1000 words in length. Include the title, author, and purchase price, and ISBN.
- Poetry can be up to 100 lines.
- Artwork should be submitted with a summary of the background, purpose, and reason for the piece, under 200 words.

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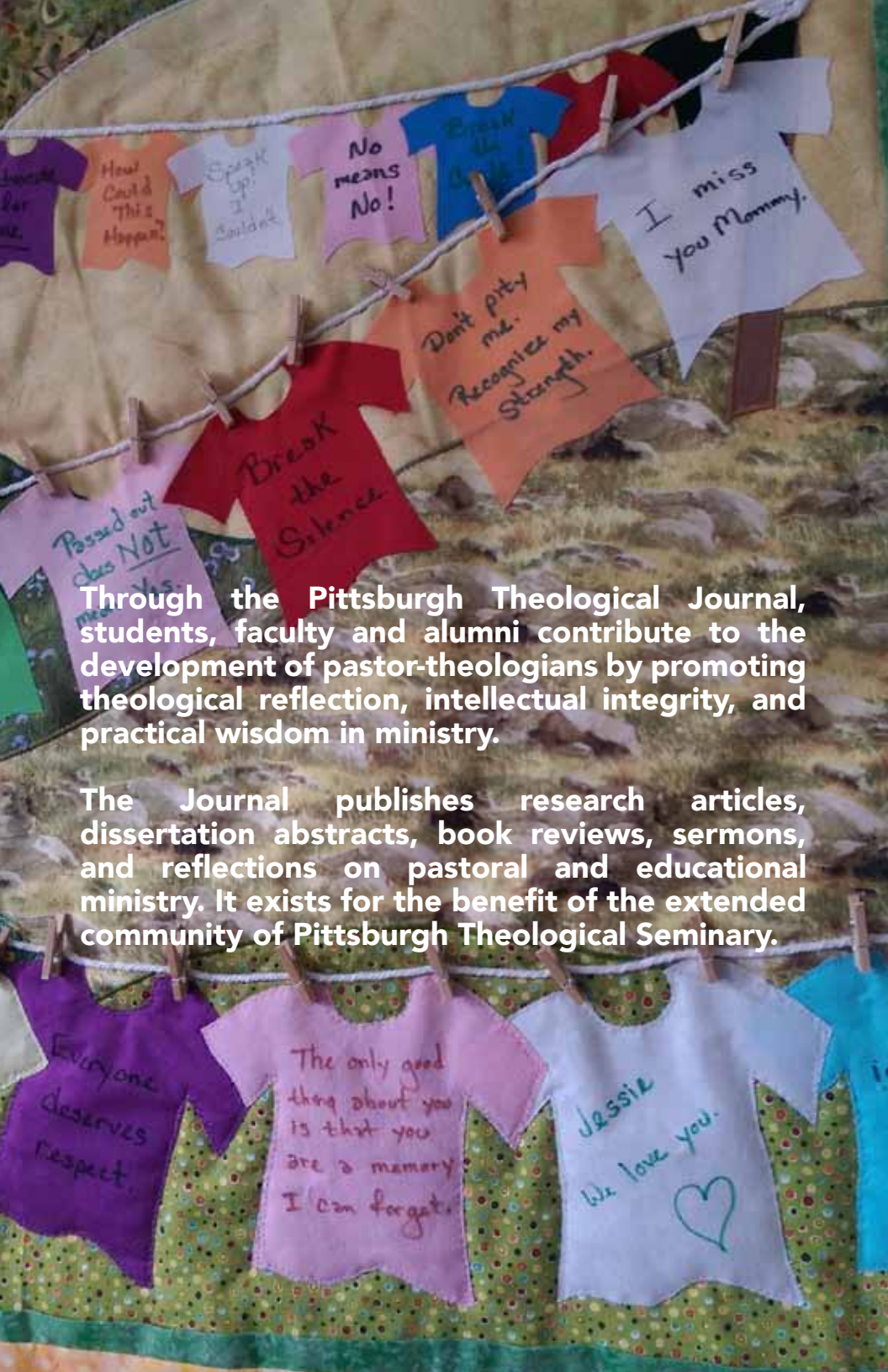

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