Schools in a Pluralist Culture

Christian Reflection
A SERIES IN FAITH AND ETHICS

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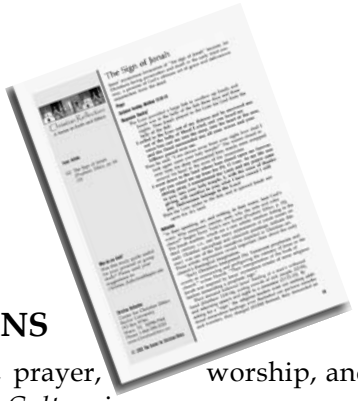

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Introduction

BY ROBERT B. KRUSCHWITZ

In our pluralist culture, educational goals and institutions are deeply contested. How can we humbly cooperate with others to discern the common good and advance it in ways that are consistent with our calling as disciples?

How we conceive the goals of education, the virtues required for teaching, and the essential contributions of schools, will begin and end for Christians "with the values taught by, practiced by, and embodied in Jesus Christ," Stephen Webb has written. For this reason, we should order our children's education toward their grateful service to God and self-sacrificial love for others and the creation, rather than the pursuit of individual desires.

Yet many questions about schooling remain. How should we participate in and encourage the education of all children and young people in our communities? In this pluralist culture where the goals, institutional forms, and content of education are deeply contested, how can we humbly cooperate with others to discern the common good and advance it in ways that are consistent with our calling as disciples? Our contributors guide us in these twin tasks—to be clear about the goals of education and to pursue them in concert with neighbors who may disagree.

Schools, through their curriculum and ethos, provide orienting stories that powerfully shape students' identities. If these stories leave out or conflict with the Christian orientating narrative in Scripture, what are we to do? Since, as Christians, our true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), we must help our "kids understand as well as practice what it means to be resident aliens" in the wider culture, Perry Glanzer writes in *Raising Resident Aliens* (p. 11). This becomes complicated because "Public schools may lead a child to love being a *resident* too much while home or private schooling may not adequately train students to live in this world (though as an *alien*)."

Melissa Browning discusses the increasing religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity in classrooms across the country. Will it undermine educa-

tion and turn classrooms into places of contention and disagreeableness? Much depends on how teachers respond. "The classroom as a pluralist space should be appreciated for its potential to cultivate peace and extend moral awareness," she suggests in *Listening in the Classroom* (p. 27). "As teachers and students listen—to texts, to marginalized voices, for privilege, and through activism and experiential learning—they can work together to create learning rooted in justice."

In our society that embraces pluralism, we are often reluctant to address central moral questions in school like "What is the good life?" and "How should we live if we are to be truly happy?" So, we settle for values clarification rather than moral education. "If we extol personal autonomy and encourage the young to craft a life of their own, yet do not provide them with the form of life and communities that make a good life possible, should we wonder why they find themselves increasingly lonely and aimless?" ask Darin Davis and Paul Wadell in *Schooling the Young into Goodness* (p. 35). They diagnose the crippling disillusionment and distracting busyness that results in young people as *acedia*, one of the deadly sins that is "especially toxic for one's soul and spirit."

In What Teachers Love about Teaching (p. 20), Stephen Webb resists the temptation to reduce teaching to a set of skills that are captured in buzzwords and rubrics. "Teaching is such a personal art, so context-dependent and unpredictable, that what works can change from minute to minute, let alone day to day," he notes. "Perhaps teaching, in the end, is just too integral to human nature to ever be amenable to careful delineation."

The complexity of the art of teaching, the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse learners, and difficult realities of daily life in a particular school can discourage even the most dedicated teachers, Minori Nagahara admits in *Teaching as a Christian Vocation* (p. 76). "Hope, grace, and hospitality are the keys to their flourishing amid the obstacles and frustrations that could breed disillusionment."

In *Pursuing Knowledge* (p. 46), Heidi Hornik explores the profound vision in Raphael's fresco *School of Athens,* one of the most famous Italian Renaissance paintings. The artist teaches us that the "pursuit of knowledge requires a conversation among friends that unites the disciplines across centuries and human cultures." In *A School for Artists* (p. 50), she studies Giovanni Stradano's *The Practice of the Visual Arts* for the fascinating glimpse it provides into the first schools in the western tradition to train artists.

The worship service by Allison Buras (p. 56) leads us to confession before the Lord who is our "loving teacher," "faithful provider," and "truthful guide." She celebrates the vocation of teachers in the church or in schools. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette's new hymn, "God, You Give Each Generation," reflects on God's call for us to love all young people through education: "May the children who are yearning / to be all that they can be / find in every school the caring / of the whole community."

Virgil Gulker's *One Makes All the Difference* (p. 62) and Randy Wood's *Teaching ESL to Immigrant Families in Public Schools* (p. 66) describe two exciting ways for congregations to support learning in public schools. "While most at-risk students do need help with academic skills," Gulker notes, "their greatest needs, according to their teachers, are emotional and social." KIDS HOPE USA partners resource-strapped schools with congregations that provide one-on-one tutors for one hour each week. Wood explains the origin of Learning English Among Friends (LEAF), an innovative family literacy program that is "enriching classroom curriculum and providing after-school tutoring for new immigrant students, and teaching English and parenting skills to their parents."

When families decide to homeschool, how can they maintain a relationship of mutual support with the public school system? How can the children continue to engage the culture through interaction with their school-age peers? In *When Education Comes Home* (p. 71), Charles and Edna Christian discuss their decision to teach their sons at home, but with the support of a public school-sponsored homeschool resource center in Seattle, Washington.

Should public school teachers instruct their students about religion? How can they do it without indoctrinating them, or violating constitutional guarantees of the free exercise of religion? In *Teaching about Religion in the Public Schools* (p. 83), Todd Ream reviews three recent books—Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes's *Taking Religion Seriously across the Curriculum*, Robert Kunzman's *Grappling with the Good: Talking about Religion and Morality in Public Schools*, and Kent Greenawalt's *Does God Belong in Public Schools?*—that tackle these difficult questions. "Relegating religious identity to the private sphere fails both teachers and students," Ream concludes. "Developing a charitable spirit toward others' religious identities is necessary not only for a deep understanding of religion in the world today, but also for achieving the goals of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence."

"Being a teacher is an isolating and lonely profession," Sheila Gloer observes. "When the students arrive, the door is shut and the teachers are alone with their charges. The students all have individual needs, individual learning styles, and individual goals to achieve. This is a daunting responsibility, and most teachers face it by themselves." In *Spiritual Nourishment for Teachers* (p. 88), she commends four resources that can guide Christian teachers to strengthen their relationship with God: Ginger Farry's *A Teacher's Prayerbook: To Know and Love Your Students*, Michele Howe's *Prayers for Homeschool Moms*, Vicki Caruana's *Before the Bell Rings: 180 Inspirations to Start a Teacher's Day*, and Susan O'Carroll Drake's *Morning Meetings with Jesus: 180 Devotions for Teachers*. "As a homeschool parent, a teacher with impoverished students, a teacher in the suburbs or rural areas, or a teacher in a private school setting, you will find that one of these books is right for you," Gloer promises, to "encourage and inspire you as you seek to fulfill your God-given call to teach."

Raising Resident Aliens

BY PERRY L. GLANZER

As Christians we are also "citizens" of another kingdom. If faithful disciples experience life as "aliens and exiles," then a good Christian education must include helping kids understand as well as practice what it means to be resident aliens.

My oldest son, in kindergarten at the time, casually informed me of this identity label at the dinner table one evening: "Caley calls me an alien." "Why?" I asked. "Because she says I'm weird," my son replied. Usually, it pains me to hear about my son being called names, but this time I decided to reinforce Caley's point. "You know, Bennett, we *are* aliens." "Really?" he asked.

This occasion produced merely one of the many conversations my wife and I hope to have with my son. We want him to understand that choosing to be a faithful disciple of Christ will identify him as one of the "aliens and exiles" on this earth (1 Peter 2:11). Or to use the terminology of Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, Christians are "resident aliens."

Of course, what it means to be a "resident alien" can be subject to some misunderstanding, as we have learned in our family. When talking about the paperwork for renewing my wife's resident alien card, our youngest son exclaimed, "Mommy, you can't be an alien. If you're an alien you have to be from outer space." I chimed in that during my first Christmas in Canada (my wife's country of citizenship), it actually felt as cold as outer space (minus twenty-five degrees Celsius for five straight days to be exact), but I do not think that my son or wife thought that comment was helpful. My wife then patiently explained that being a resident alien means you are a citizen of another country.

The Apostle Paul reminds Christians "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). Thus, good Christian education, at the very least, involves helping kids understand as well as practice what it means to be resident aliens. As with most Christian parents, we are not always sure

what it means to raise resident aliens. Nonetheless, we have gained some insight into the process from the presence of a literal resident alien and two dual citizens in the family.

IDENTITY-SHAPING STORIES

We enter the world as strangers not knowing who we are. According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, we should allow children to learn about themselves naturally. In fact, the best kind of education, according to Rousseau's philosophy, involves protecting children from society's corruption by taking them out to nature. Not surprisingly, Rousseau never raised his own children and had his mistress take those he sired to an orphanage. Spending time in nature may do many things, but neither educated human beings nor resident aliens are cultivated naturally. Children need help and guidance to discover who they are.

In this endeavor, resident aliens realize they cannot depend solely on the majority political community for help. Since my wife remains a Canadian, our children are dual citizens (members of two kingdoms as Augustine would describe it). I do not believe my son has learned more than a few facts about Canada in the three years he has attended an American public school. His Canadian identity has simply not been addressed or nurtured. Of course, we are not surprised by this fact. American public schools seek to create productive Americans and are not designed to produce good Canadians. We recognize that the cultivation of his Canadian identify will take a special effort.

Resident alien Christians face a similar challenge. We should also not downplay the challenge or shrug it off. Education can inform children of their identity but it can also warp their self-understanding. Without some educating from members of our family, my son would know nothing of his Canadian identity, Canadian history, or Canadian special rituals, practices, heroes, and particular cultural achievements. Christian resident aliens face a similar danger. One study of high school texts books found, "The underlying worldview of modern education divorces humankind from its dependence on God; it replaces religious answers to many of the ultimate questions of human existence with secular answers; and, most striking, public education conveys its secular understanding of reality essentially as a matter of faith."[1] Young resident aliens may lose their identity unless parents and the resident alien community, the Church, carefully cultivate it.

One of the primary ways that children develop an understanding of themselves and their world is through narratives or stories. As Alasdair MacIntyre notes, "Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words."[2] My son will learn what it means to be a Canadian by learning Canadian history and literature.

Christians have been graced with a similar kind of orientating narrative through Scripture. Thus, just as Israelite parents were instructed to pass

along God's law (Deuteronomy 4:9-13, 6:7, and 11:19; cf. Psalm 78:5), they were also told to tell the stories of God's saving works to their children in order to orient their lives and provide context for rules. Rules can provide some degree of guidance for children, but children will always need to know the reasons for the rules. These reasons are rooted in identity stories. Before giving the Ten Commandments, God reminded Israel of their redemptive story, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, the land of slavery" (Exodus 20:2). Similarly, Christian parents and educators must teach children to understand the moral life as well as all of education in light of the overarching Christian story of God's creation, humanity's fall, and God's redemption and ultimate restoration.

These stories provide a holistic understanding of identity that my child will never receive through politically controlled forms of education that tend to downplay or avoid competing identities and allegiances. Just as public schools do not help my son understand his true Canadian identity, they also will leave him without an understanding of his wider human identity and worth although they may try. For example, left-leaning educators have often attempted to bolster students' self-esteem using positive affirmation techniques such as "think happy thoughts" while some conservative traditionalists have argued for grounding a child's self-worth on academic competence. Either approach neglects the Christian understanding that all humans have worth and dignity because they are created by God in his image. The mentally or physically handicapped child and the cognitively or athletically gifted student have worth, value, and dignity apart from what they can either accomplish or not accomplish. Their dignity and worth also does not depend on whether they "think happy thoughts." If we fail to impart this identity story to our children, we have neglected to tell them the truth about who they and others really are.

Identity-shaping stories do more than provide a sense of human worth; they also shape our affections and desires. My son suddenly wants to visit New York City because has learned about the Statue of Liberty in school. He knows nothing about Ottawa, Montreal, or Toronto.

Children need help and guidance to discover who they are. In this endeavor, resident aliens realize they cannot depend solely on the majority political community for help.

Similarly, in my own public school experience I was trained to think and desire like a citizen of this world and not a resident alien. For example, while pondering the overwhelming array of occupational options during my senior year in high school, I eliminated the alternatives with a simple question: What career will fit my interests, provide long-term job security,

and generate a high salary? I decided upon engineering for the simple reason that there were numerous job openings promising plentiful pay. In retrospect, I cringe at the thought of my earlier reasoning. Why did longings about salary and security guide my decision about a college major? Fundamentally, I forgot who I was and how my Christian identity story should guide my life purpose and desires. Instead, I let myself be shaped by a different story. Neil Postman in his book, *The End of Education,* labels it the narrative of Economic Utility: "The story tells us that we are first and foremost economic creatures and that our sense of worth and purpose is to be found in our capacity to secure material benefits."[3] I longed for financial success and security in this kingdom and not treasures in the kingdom of God.

CURRICULUM AND ETHOS

In the three years my dual-citizen child has attended American public schools, I have been continually struck by the role American identity plays in structuring the whole educational experience. Within those three years, my son learned about American history, the American Constitution, and American heroes such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. He saw icons of George W. Bush on the wall and often came home with questions about him (e.g., "Will he die when he stops being president?"). He heard debates about presidential candidates, learned about democratic practices, and even practiced being a democrat by voting in a mock presidential election. He also learned the Pledge of Allegiance, "The Star Spangled Banner," and information about major American wars. He drew pictures of the Statue of Liberty and the Capitol and now, in addition to New York, wants to visit Washington, D.C. He even completed an assignment in which he was to answer the question, "What makes you proud to be an American?" Clearly, more than simple teaching about basic reading skills or social studies takes place in American schools. Educators help students cultivate and prize certain identities through their school's curriculum and overall ethos. In fact, the integration of American democracy and learning is amazingly thorough and effective in our public schools.

Not surprisingly, resident aliens take different subjects and imbibe a different ethos. My wife took six years of French, Canadian history, and Canadian literature, studied Canadian politics, and learned to sing "O Canada" (which to this day I have not fully learned). Thus, at home, my resident-alien wife engages in another form of education. She buys books on Canadian history, we celebrate Canadian holidays such as Canada Day with Canadian icons (e.g., the flag) and special foods with significance (e.g., we drink Canada Dry), and my children are learning to sing "O Canada" (better than their father).

In a similar manner, as Christian resident aliens, we must recognize the need to teach our children an alternative curriculum and help them live in another ethos. Interestingly, I find that Christian educators often mimic the

wider culture when it comes to the curriculum they use when educating their children. In my own study of the curriculum of Christian colleges and universities I found that most do not require students to take a course in church history although they do require students to take a course in American history or Western civilization. Students are taught literature based on national categories (e.g., American, English) and not based on the redemptive nature of the works. We fail to realize that our different citizenship should alter our curriculum.

Heroes do (and should) vary by the identity celebrated. After first grade my son could already tell me loads of things about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. He knew nothing about the first or even the most recent prime minister of Canada. Christians will need to teach their children about a whole different range of heroes such as the martyrs, the church fathers, and the saints. For Christians, the importance of this point goes even deeper. Since we believe we are made in the image of God and that God has become incarnated in Christ, we gain the best insight about what it means to bear God's image and be fully human through Christ. By imitating Christ's sacrificial love, humility, servanthood, forgiveness of enemies, and acceptance, we learn how to be more fully human. Stories of other saints can also help, and I believe much more should be done in this area. When I ask Christian students—even those educated in home or Christian schools—the names of the first five presidents of the United States, almost everyone can list them. When I ask if they know about famous church fathers such as Augustine, Polycarp, and John Chrysostom, they shake their heads. Yet for Christians these characters in the Christian story of the church should be more important than the presidents in the story of the American nation-state.

What it means to be a national citizen is transmitted through a school's ethos. Resident-alien homes and communities must embody a distinct ethos with different symbols, icons, and calendars.

Much of what it means to be a citizen gets transmitted through a school's ethos and not its formal curriculum. My son's classrooms have been filled with icons of presidents and American flags. The public school where we live starts the day with pledges of allegiance to America and Texas. Other holidays and rituals also serve to reinforce identity. My son came home one day from first grade and asked, "Dad, did you litter today?" Surprised by the question, I said, "No, why?" He replied, "It's Earth Day today." The holiday calendar he imbibed shaped his moral outlook. In fact, my elementary son's learning often revolves around various national and secularized holidays, as does his artwork.

Resident-alien homes and communities must embody a whole different ethos with different symbols, icons, and calendars. I have mentioned some ways we familiarize our dual citizen children with Canadian symbols, icons, and calendars, but more importantly we hope to pass along a familiarity and understanding for Christian symbols and icons and the Christian calendar and conception of time. We celebrate not just Christmas but Advent, and we seek to find periods for Sabbath rest when we do not engage in work. We want our children to live by a different calendar and a different understanding of time rooted not in the preservation of an earthly nation but in the preservation of citizenship in the kingdom of God.

IDENTITY CONFLICTS

While everyone has multiple identities and often must juggle conflicts among them, resident aliens tend to experience identity conflicts even more. For example, when my wife reads our local library's books about heroes of the Revolutionary War or the War of 1812, she does not always empathize with the laudatory tone of the books—especially when it comes to the attempted invasion of Canada or the need for a revolution for independence. She reads history as a Canadian in light of Canada's story.

Young resident aliens will need to recognize the many ways in which such conflicts of interpretive perspective may take place. Some of these may appear trivial. My wife always wants to play Christmas music before Thanksgiving. Of course, she tells me she is not playing Christmas music before Thanksgiving, because Thanksgiving in Canada takes place in October. Christian resident aliens should recognize that how we interpret history, structure time, and give meaning to holidays are vitally important. If we lived in a culture that ordered time differently, such as Islamic culture, we would understand this point even more. Recently, a group of Muslim scientists and clerics even called for the adoption of "Mecca time" since they argued that the Western calendar is a colonial imposition.

Certainly, some remnants of our Christian culture still remain. Our dating system centers on the life of Christ and our understanding of the seven-day week stems from Genesis 1. Likewise, schools still often break for major Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Nonetheless, teaching a Christian conception of time and Christian rituals may become more difficult for resident aliens. Public schools largely secularize holidays.

Here again are places we must make the effort to tell the Christian stories about the heroes behind certain holidays, like Saint Patrick. Indeed this saint, who was a former slave who returned to his place of enslavement to spread the gospel to Ireland, exemplified what it means to live as a resident alien. In this respect, however, we try to use possible identity conflicts as teaching opportunities. After all, we want to form our sons' ability to choose. Just as at age eighteen they will choose their national identity, they will also have to make other identity loyalty choices that at times may be mutually exclusive.

In light of some of the conflicts mentioned above, Christians often discuss whether forming their own schools would be better for educating resident aliens. We should be wary about giving a simple answer to this question. After all, the Christian story reminds us that the corrupting influence of the Fall shows up in unexpected places, as does God's special grace. In this regard, we can observe possible weaknesses with any form of education. Public schools may lead a child to love being a *resident* too much while home or private schooling may not adequately train students to live in this world (though as an *alien*).

Still, resident aliens realize that those options that place less control of education in the hands of the state and more control in the hands of parents or resident-alien communities will be more conducive to educating resident aliens. In this respect, religious or home forms of schooling will provide greater opportunities for children to encounter an education formed by the story of Christian resident aliens. Among public schools, charter schools provide the greater opportunity for parental input.

Not surprisingly, highly centralized and repressive political states, often communist or totalitarian (e.g., China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Burma), outlaw home and private schooling and mandate public school attendance for all. They fear alien forms of education. Interestingly, the emergence of young forms of liberal democracy in countries such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine went hand-in-hand with the legalization of home and private schooling.

Even public schools in liberal democracies, however, hold a danger for resident aliens. As legal philosopher John Robinson astutely notes, "Even the well-intentioned state tends to homogenize its citizens, delegitimizing all loyalties except those that bind the individual to the state."[4] With all the focus on American identity, stories, heroes, rituals, holidays, and traditions in American public schools, I am worried that my son will not remember what John Howard Yoder says about being a resident alien: "the ultimate meaning of history will not be found in the course of earthly empires or the development of proud cultures, but in the calling together of the 'chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation,' which is the church of Christ."[5] I see my son being trained to love America first and foremost, having his other identities neglected and being tempted to embrace earthly success instead of Christ. Thus, Christian parents who send their children to public schools must seek

Public schools may lead a child to love being a RESIDENT too much while home or private schooling may not adequately train students to live in this world (though as an ALIEN).

to supplement the education their children receive from the state with education for another form of citizenship.

A CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

In a search for educational models of how resident aliens should approach education, I set before my own students the model of one of the fathers of modern education, Jon Amos Comenius (1592-1670). He provides an excellent example of many of the qualities mentioned above. If anyone knew what it meant to be a resident alien—in both the political and theological sense—Comenius knew. Brought up in present-day Czech Republic during times of political and religious strife, Comenius was forced to flee from his homeland, to which he was never able to return. He lived in seven different countries, and near the end of his life he wrote, "My life was a continuous wandering. I never had a home. Without pause I was constantly tossed about. Nowhere did I ever find a secure place to live."[6]

Despite leading the life of a resident alien, Comenius became one of Europe's most well-known educational reformers. His educational ideas were deemed revolutionary from the simple fact that he conceived that all education—in its purpose, structure, curriculum, and methods—should be influenced by the Christian story. For instance, with regard to the structure of education, he became one of the first educators to suggest the radical idea of "providing education to the entire human race regardless of age, class, sex, and nationality" including "young and old, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, men and women—in a word, of every human being born on earth."[7] The basis for this amazingly progressive and humanizing vision sprang from Comenius's view of humanity as made in God's image. "All men are born for the same main purpose; they are to be human beings, i.e., rational creatures, masters over the other creatures and images of the Creator," Comenius wrote. "God himself often testifies that before Him all things are equal. Therefore if we educate only a few and exclude the rest, we act unjustly not only against our fellow men but also against God who wishes to be known, loved and praised by all."[8]

In many other ways, Comenius gave himself to developing a whole vision of Christian education from which we can learn today. In his magnum opus, *The Great Didactic,* it is noteworthy to observe the fundamental basis for this vision. Comenius believed "the ultimate end of man is beyond this life."[9] He understood that Christian education *begins* with remembering that we are resident aliens.

Furthermore, a Christian educator should remind us that in the *end* one day we will no longer be aliens. In this respect, Christian education should directly contradict what is depicted in the well-known movie, *Dead Poets Society*. In the movie the teacher Mr. Keating (played by Robin Williams) takes his students into the school lobby on the first day of class. There, like most good educators, he places their learning and lives in the context of a

wider story. Yet, there is something disturbing about the story he tells. He reminds students that they are "food for worms" and that some day they will grow old and die. End of story. Therefore, he encourages them to "seize the day." In the end, one should not be surprised that when the father of one student prevents his son from fulfilling his life's passion, the son commits suicide. After all, without being able to seize the day today and with little to hope for beyond this fallen world, life becomes hopelessly tragic.

Education for Christian resident aliens should take place within the context of a different story. For resident aliens, the shattering of a dream does not lead to despair. Resident aliens have a dual citizenship. They also belong to another kingdom under another king, and so hope can never be extinguished.

NOTES

1 Warren A. Nord, *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 160.

2 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory,* third edition (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2007), 216.

3 Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 28.

4 John H. Robinson, "Why Schooling Is So Controversial in America Today," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics and Public Policy,* 3 (1988), 519-533, here quoting 532.

5 John Howard Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1964), 13.

6 Jon Amos Comenius, *Unum Necessarium*, 10, 10. Reprinted in *Johannis Amos Comenii Opera Omnia*, volume 18 (Prague, 1974), 127.

7 Jon Amos Comenius, *Comenius's Pampaedia or Universal Education*, translated by A. M. O. Dobbie (Dover, UK: Buckland Publications, 1986), 19.

8 Jon Amos Comenius, "Selections from the Great Didactic," in *Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom*, edited and translated by Robert Ulich, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 343.

9 Jon Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, translated by M. W. Keatinge, second edition (1910) (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 27.

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What Teachers Love about Teaching

BY STEPHEN H. WEBB

Teaching is such a personal art, so context-dependent and unpredictable, that it cannot be reduced to a method or set of skills. So what do teachers really love when they talk about how much they love teaching?

I have never loved teaching so much as when I have been a participant in a teaching workshop. Sharing stories, strategies, successes, and failures can be liberating and transformative. I have been teaching college for twenty years, but a workshop gives me the energy and excitement of a novice. Teaching can feel like digging a long, dark tunnel with no clear end in sight. Once you are done with one hole you abandon it, with hardly enough time to clean up the mess you have made, and start all over again. A workshop feels like you have popped into a bright and airy grotto where all the tunnels meet. You discover that others have been digging right alongside you, even when you thought you were all alone. You swap stories about the hardness of the rock, trade tips about the best kinds of shovels, and complain about the backbreaking labor. Most of all, however, you share the joy of the emeralds and rubies you have found and helped to free from the stubborn clumping of the earth. Teaching, at such moments, seems both dangerous and exhilarating! Then, all of a sudden, the workshop is over, and you have to start digging your hole again.

BOUNDARIES AND TRUST

Teaching is a lonely business. That probably sounds paradoxical, because teaching plays such an important role in national debates about public policy, and anyway, teaching is something you cannot do alone. Nonetheless, the actual labor of teaching takes place in private. Sure, there are students there, but they are not an audience, watching what the teacher

does. They are supposed to be participating as much as the teacher. Outside of the teacher and the students…well, when teaching works, there is nothing outside of the classroom. That space and time becomes all there is—until the bell rings and everyone heads to the door.

When someone is visiting my classroom, it usually means one of two things. Either a colleague is evaluating me for a peer review assessment (which usually comes to an abrupt end after tenure) or a high school student is sampling my institution's wares. Either way, it often feels like the delicate climate I have struggled for weeks to create has been hit by a threatening weather pattern. Students who had sunny dispositions just a couple of days ago now act like a fog has descended into our room. This is such a small sample of my work, I want to cry out, a snapshot of a long and interesting drama that would need to be filmed to do it justice! Silences get heavier, I get chattier, and my jokes fall flatter when visitors enter my class. The result is a twist on that parody of a philosophical question about whether a tree falling in a forest makes any noise if nobody is there to hear it. In my classroom, the tree is perfectly quiet when someone comes to watch me chop it down.

Can a visitor ever see or hear what a teacher sees and hears in the classroom? Visitors see a silent kid in the corner, but they do not see the eye contact with the teacher or the conversations after class. Visitors hear a stilted comment while the teacher hears the end product of weeks of coaxing and cajoling. When people visit my classroom, I get defensive, as if someone were crashing the annual Webb family reunion. I want to pull them aside and explain that Uncle Paul is not always like that, while Aunt Mary is actually paying more attention than you might think.

Teaching is a private activity because the classroom has to be separated from the outside world if the teacher wants any chance of success. Boundaries make trust possible, and trust opens the door to a real intimacy of minds. The teacher and the students huddle together to share stories, information, questions, and ideas in confidence, without worrying what other people might say. Students play roles by trying on new ideas, and teachers play roles by prodding and provoking. Distraction is the enemy, and focus is the goal. Sometimes students talk only to the teacher, as if nobody else was in the room. This is like preschool children on a playground doing what psychologists call parallel play. The children are engrossed in a specific activity, but not with each other. When the learning gets going, however, the students begin talking to each other, and parallel play turns into a free for all, with the teacher trying to orchestrate the chaos. There is a sweet spot in every class where a question, text, or problem will take off and find a life of its own, both absorbing and replenishing everyone's energy.

All of this is possible only within the protective enclosure of a certain space and a specific time. Take space: we meet here, in this room, with a cluster of chairs and a chalkboard (I do not do PowerPoint yet!). Something as important as education, just like something as important as worship,

needs its own space. Even Winnie the Pooh needed his thinking spot. Take time: our lives are so busy that we rarely have time just to think. Thinking, in fact, demands a slowing of time. The fleeting nature of time (it is always running out) is the pressure that forces us to act, but thinking suspends time by postponing the need for a decision. Ordinarily, our lives are divided between the productivity of work and the luxury of relaxation. We either use time to get things done or we waste time to enjoy ourselves. Thinking is another kind of time altogether. A great classroom discussion does not produce a marketable commodity, but neither is it a wasteful expenditure of energy. Instead, it is that transformative experience when work feels like play and play takes on the gravity of work. In this sense, education is truly the luxury of time.

Teaching is to talking as a symphony is to humming. The intensity of the experience makes it hard to describe. So much is going on in a class that if you start trying to read each student's mind you could lose your own.

To see these points, by the way, just try teaching your students while having lunch with them. You can have great conversations outside of the classroom, and teaching moments, though rare, can happen anywhere, but to teach a group of students on a regular basis, you need a particular time and space to teach. On sunny days, my students sometimes want to meet outside, and once in awhile I relent. We wander around until we find just the right tree to sit under, settle ourselves on the grass and immediately begin to lose our focus. Either they are young and idealistic about the possibilities of serious human discourse or they know exactly what they are getting us into!

A PERSONAL ART

Teaching is to talking as a symphony is to humming. Indeed, the intensity of the teaching experience can make it hard to describe in the abstract. There is so much going on in a single class that if you start trying to read every student's mind you could lose your own. "Assessment" is a big buzzword these days, flitting about every education discussion, often to the annoyance of most teachers, but how do you assess something as internal as thought? What makes it so difficult is that teachers have to keep track of the thoughts of their students while they are trying to formulate their own. It is like cooking food, feeding your guests, eating with them, and writing a restaurant review all at the same time.

All of this just points to the importance of workshops for teachers. Finally, you have time to spend with colleagues who are more eager to hear about your daily toil than even your spouse! Of course, not all teaching workshops

are successful. Some can be too heavy on the 'tips of the trade' side, while others can be squelched by too many experts or too much steam being let off. When teaching workshops hit that sweet spot, however, they can make teaching seem like the best job in the world.

Teaching is so personal and unpredictable that just as there is no model classroom, there is no model workshop. What makes one workshop work will ruin another, especially among teachers. Like a regular class, workshops need time to build momentum and satisfy expectations. I have been in two that met regularly during a two-year period, and the timing was perfect. The first met during my early years of teaching, when I needed some help to make sure I was on the right track. The second met during mid-career, when I needed to know that the track was still going somewhere. I also led a lengthy workshop that was…well, it was harder to be the teacher than the student. That one helped me realize just how many tracks there are—and just how hard it is to create a space (remember the grotto?) where all the tracks can connect.

A workshop for teachers is always going to be challenging to lead, because getting teachers together in the same room to talk about teaching is like getting a bunch of baseball coaches together to play a game. Coaches are used to telling other people how to play, not playing themselves. Teachers want to teach, but if you have a room full of teachers, who is going to play the role of the student? Teachers are great at seeing through lesson plans and second-guessing the goals of workshop sessions. I have been to several workshops where the exercise planned for us never happened because so many of my fellow participants kept asking about its purpose and design. Perhaps it is a professional hazard of teaching that we teachers are inoculated to good teaching, just as a baseball coach cannot just sit back and enjoy the game. As much as I love teaching workshops, I have learned the most about my vocation when I have observed classrooms where I had to keep my thoughts about teaching to myself.

What worries me about workshops is just how much teachers, me included, love to hear our own voices. A lot of teachers go into their profession because they were so good at being students that they did not want to stop, but good students like impressing their teachers, and when a bunch of teachers try to impress each other, watch out! In fact, I suspect that some teachers love to talk about teaching more than they love teaching itself. That is not such a surprising or perverse claim when you stop to think about it. If you get a bunch of baseball coaches together, are they really going to want to swing a bat and run the bases? Most likely they will enjoy talking about the game more than playing it.

ABSTRACT BUZZWORDS

Just as almost anything can be said about teaching, almost anything can be said *during* a teaching workshop. Workshops construct a discourse about

teaching that can be far removed from the practice itself. Take four of the buzzwords that I have heard developed and espoused in teaching workshops and pedagogical journals: formation, service, tolerance, and transparency.

Formation comes in various guises, from citizenship to morality and even spirituality. Learning, according to this buzzword, is about character development. The classroom, I have heard repeated over and over again, is a laboratory for democracy. Students need to practice the skills that will make them good citizens (or good parents, good Christians, or just plain good). The problem with this language is that most teachers do not know their students well enough, nor do they have sufficient moral authority, to aim at such lofty goals. Teaching a book, any book, is hard enough without worrying whether one's students will volunteer for the school board down the road.

Service is linked to formation because getting students out into the community is increasingly important for school administrators under pressure to make the economic rewards of education more apparent. Chipping away at the walls that separate the classroom from the real world is supposed to enhance education's practical value and social relevance. Teaching workshops are often geared to helping teachers figure out ways to add a service component to their courses. The problem is that learning is all about asking questions, while improving the world is all about implementing a specific agenda of change. There is a time to act, but there is also a time to think, and learning to think well takes a lot of time. Nothing is a substitute for holding students accountable to the most rigorous and consistent modes of thought.

A classroom dedicated to forming students in the tradition of social justice determines all the right answers from the start and thus limits the kinds of questions that students can ask. The result turns tolerance into an absolute virtue, an end in itself, rather than a means toward more open inquiry. Tolerance should be a byproduct of learning, because the more we learn, the more we realize how little we know. Instead, today it has become the whole point of learning. Tolerance as the goal of education actually undermines moral formation, because it treats all moral judgments as mere opinions and treats all opinions as equally plausible.

Perhaps because higher education has become so politicized in recent years, there have been demands for transparency in teaching, but what the general public means by transparency and what teachers mean by it are quite separate things. The general public wants teachers to be more neutral, or at least balanced, when it comes to moral, political, and religious issues. What transparency means in the world of workshops is that teachers should let students know what they are doing by divulging the secrets of the trade. Teachers should be like magicians who pull the rabbit slowly out of the hat, deconstructing the magic with a lesson in mechanics. Thus, workshops give teachers tips about how to enlist students in constructing the syllabus and how to turn the classroom over to the students to do the teaching.

What these buzzwords have in common is just how process-oriented the classroom has become. A process-oriented classroom focuses on how students learn rather than what they should learn. Process-oriented teachers spend a lot of time talking about student experience, student learning habits, and student expectations. Teachers are supposed to be aware of how their students are aware of them, so that they can monitor student responses to the material and adjust course goals to meet diverse learning habits. This sounds dangerously circular: we study them in order to learn how they respond to us so that we can better assess the ways in which we fail to reach them—or something like that! While studying how students learn is important, there is no substitute for the old-fashioned goals of education. Teaching has to be grounded in great and enduring questions, and inviting the student to join in those questions is to some extent asking the student to leave behind their old patterns and habits of learning. I am not sure, in other words, how much I want to ponder the way my students do (and do not!) learn.

LIMITS OF PEDAGOGICAL THEORY

Perhaps the hardest thing about teaching workshops is that, like every class, they must end, and end rather abruptly at that. Anyone who has been to a teaching workshop knows the experience of the let down when it is all over. After all the exhilaration, you piece together your notes and prod your memory for all of those stimulating suggestions and inspiring moments that seemed, at the time, like they would change your life forever. You have been reborn, but now you have to go back to work. Workshops, like revivals, are hard to sustain.

The transition from workshop to classroom is hard because teaching is an art that cannot be reduced to a method or set of skills. Teaching is such a personal art, so context-dependent and unpredictable, that what works can change from minute to minute, let alone day to day. Every teacher knows those days when carefully wrought plans go nowhere while exhaustion and despair unintentionally encourage the students to perk up and take over. In the right context or with the right circumstances, any personal style can be effective in the classroom, just as any pedagogical theory (whether student, text, or skill based) can illuminate classroom dynamics. Pedagogical methods (the tips and strategies) are important because teachers need a stock of tactics and skills to fall back on when

Teaching must be grounded in great and enduring questions. Inviting students to join in those questions is to some extent asking them to leave behind their old patterns and habits of learning.

nothing else seems to work. Theories of teaching, however, will never quench our desire to know why one class went beautifully and another was so dull. Pedagogical theory emerges from the inevitable failures all teachers have in connecting students with the course material, but theory works best when it leaves open the wounds to the natural healing of time and experience rather than closing them with rules and maxims.

Perhaps teaching, in the end, is just too integral to human nature to ever be amenable to careful delineation. We teach what we know, and thus, to a significant extent, we teach who we are, and so a good theory of teaching, to cover the field, would have to describe human nature in all of its subtle complexity. Maybe that is why teaching workshops so often stick to sharing stories.

As much as I love talking about teaching, I love teaching even more, although I cannot explain why. For me, teaching is a combination of communication that is honestly spontaneous with a deep passion for the questions and texts at hand. You have to be in the moment and in the book at the same time. That is hard, and it is certainly a relief to find out from other people that they too think it is hard, but talking about it only gets you so far in trying to become good at doing it.

Teaching, in a way, is simply a more condensed form of the need all of us have to pass something valuable down to the next generation. Teachers are just people who are on more intimate terms with the limits and frailties of communication than most people, and that is why they occasionally need to get together and swap stories with each other, no matter how hard that can be.

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Listening in the Classroom

BY MELISSA BROWNING

The classroom as a pluralist space should be appreciated for its potential to cultivate peace and extend moral awareness. As teachers and students listen—to texts, to marginalized voices, for privilege, and through activism and experiential learning—they can work together to create learning rooted in justice.

During the first week of class this semester, I invited my students to name the countries they were connected to. Using an online travel map, we went through each country and they answered "yes" if they or a member of their immediate family had lived in or visited that country. Among the forty-three students, 149 countries were represented. According to the travel map's calculation, our class was connected to two-thirds of the world.

My classroom reflects the diverse student body of Loyola University Chicago as a whole, in which eighty-two countries are represented and twenty-eight percent of students self-identify as Asian American, Latin American, African American, or Native American. Twenty-seven percent speak a language other than English at home. The Chicago neighborhood surrounding the university reflects a similar diversity: eighty languages are spoken within a two-mile radius of campus. In my class, about twenty-five percent of students were born outside the United States or are second-generation U.S. citizens or residents. Another twenty-five percent, born in the United States, already have traveled or lived abroad.

While university students tend to come from privileged households that are not representative of our country as a whole, they do reflect the increasing pluralism in classrooms, from elementary schools to graduate schools, across the United States. The migration movements associated with

globalization that have shaped urban populations for years are broadening to include midsize cities and small towns. The resulting religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity in classrooms has both positive and negative consequences.

For instance, when my class discusses HIV/AIDS, I point out that the connections we identify on the map show how quickly a virus like HIV can spread. This is surely one way in which globalization may be destructive. Yet the same connectedness has the positive consequence of indicating who we should be as moral people, with ethical obligations and a sense of vocation in relation to the whole world.

In a similar way, the pluralism present in schools can serve the common good as it helps us discern the contours of our moral obligation as people of faith. The classroom as a pluralist space should not be seen as a space of contention or disagreeableness, but should be appreciated for its potential to cultivate peace and extend moral awareness.

THE CLASSROOM AS PLURALIST SPACE

"A globalization of what it means to live the shalom intended by God," theologian Mercy Oduyoye urges, "is demanded by the globalization of the power of those who would rule the world by economic success."[1] The two are tied together. A globalization of shalom must become our response to the destructive potential of the interconnected power structures of our world. The classroom as pluralist space can break new ground for developing a globalization of shalom, if we can learn to listen.

Classrooms can break new ground for voice finding and solidarity if they are environments where all voices are invited to be in dialogue. But if classrooms are to be effective models of shalom, intentional listening is required from both teacher and students. Five key areas of intentional listening—to texts, to marginalized voices, for privilege, and through activism and experiential learning—can foster an atmosphere of solidarity as the (former) oppressed and (former) oppressors work together to accomplish a pedagogy rooted in justice. When close attention is given to these key areas, the classroom becomes a space of transformation as students' relation to the subject at hand and to one another as fellow learners forms them as moral persons.

Regardless of the subject matter they teach, most teachers hope the content of their courses will extend beyond what students must learn for assignments and exams. Understanding the classroom as an intentionally pluralist space can help them accomplish this task. Within each discipline there are historic and present inequalities and hegemonies. Mathematics and the sciences historically have marginalized women and girls; histories sometimes have told only one side of the story; and literature has been used to create and reinforce hegemonies of race, class, and gender. Theology—the discipline from which I teach ethics—may be the worst offender as it has evoked God in the name of wars, slavery, imperialism, and gender

discrimination. This is why it is necessary, in every setting and discipline, to reimagine the classroom as a pluralist space.

Of course, simply having a diverse group of students is not enough for the classroom to *function* as a pluralist space in which alternative views can challenge and test the prevailing one. Too often, different and dissenting voices are silenced by the dominant voice. It is up to teachers to model good listening practices, so that students learn to listen to one another. As teachers do this, the pluralism present in both culture and classroom offers a unique opportunity for them to explore human flourishing and moral decision-making not only through the content they teach, but also through the pedagogies they employ.

LISTENING TO TEXTS

A good course always begins with a good syllabus, or lesson plan, that includes the seminal texts on the subject. Yet, if we seek to re-create the classroom as a pluralist space, we must question what texts are considered "seminal," and whether or not they can be considered seminal in all contexts. Miguel De La Torre makes a convincing case that Latino/a scholars need not locate themselves within a Eurocentric discourse on ethics. The work of European American ethicists might be fine for European Americans, De La Torre says, but this body of work does not provide a helpful starting point for Latino/as because it is complicit with empire and does not understand the situation of the oppressed.[2]

Teachers can take De La Torre's view into account when they select texts—books, articles, artwork, and so on—for their students to study. Do the chosen texts reinforce hegemonies or encourage liberation? When they do enforce hegemonies, should they be discarded? Or are there additional readings that can point out the hegemonies present in the text while bringing the text into dialogue with pluralistic perspectives?

Too often in the classroom, different and dissenting voices are silenced by the dominant voice. It is up to teachers to model good listening practices, so that students learn to listen to one another.

Who writes the texts can be important also in drawing out responses from students or silencing them. Selections written by women, by individuals in the Two-Thirds World, and by others who have been historically marginalized can create space for students from these same contexts to find their own voice. For example, studies on women in the classroom show they are reluctant to speak up or have a tendency to speak with disclaimers or with

hesitation. To what extent is this due to the lack of women's voices present in a typical course reading list? When women read women, when students from the Two-Thirds World read literature from the Two-Thirds World, space for speech is created as students discover that their own stories resonate with what they are reading.

Within my discipline of theology, listening to texts also means giving attention to sacred texts. For college students who have grown up in various faith traditions, a theology classroom often provides the first place to encounter sacred texts outside of a community of faith. This distance is important, especially for women students and students from the Two-Thirds World, because of the ways sacred texts have been used in oppressive ways. Engaging the text from a new perspective of distance can create space for students to see how the texts have been interpreted in both beneficial and detrimental ways. The distance created by academic study can allow room for students to read women's voices into sacred texts or to critique the ways in which the texts have been used to authorize violence and empire. For this reason, when sacred texts are used in classrooms, it is important that they be read from varied perspectives. The biblical story of the Exodus, for example, has been read from both a liberationist perspective (focusing on God's freeing of the captives) and a postcolonial perspective (focusing on the colonization of the promised land).[3] By placing these two readings, both originating from the Two-Thirds World, in dialogue, a pluralist space can be created where students can learn to read the texts from mutually enriching perspectives.

LISTENING TO MARGINALIZED VOICES

Attention to the texts we choose is one way of listening to marginalized voices. But not all "texts" that should be written have been written. Within the bodies of literature in each discipline, there are important voices that are often overlooked as the body of literature is developed and extended by those with privilege, education, and the time to write. Liberation theologians have drawn our attention to this by arguing that theology happens not in ivory towers but in base communities. For this reason, it is important to question not only who we are reading, but also with whom our writers (and we) are in conversation. For example, African feminist theologians have argued that the African woman has "yet to be consulted by the theologian."[4] The classroom as pluralist space not only seeks out marginalized voices through the careful choice of texts, but also incorporates the stories that have not yet been written.

The use of ethnographies, or life stories, in the classroom, can provide a way to re-create the classroom as a pluralist space. In my course this semester on HIV/AIDS, the readings for each day include both an ethnography and an "issue reading." When we talk about AIDS orphans, we not only read statistics and an ethical reflection on what should be done, but we also

listen to the story of an orphan in her own words, through anything from a YouTube video to an NPR interview. Each day of class begins with the ethnography, rooting the subject for the day in a life story, with equal authority given to it and the issue reading.

Students can also accomplish this by completing qualitative interviews and creating their own ethnographies. One of my colleagues requires her students to interview individuals who are different from them in at least three ways. Through this encounter with someone of a different culture, socioeconomic class, or gender, the students are able to anchor the content of the course to issues of race, class, gender, and privilege.

LISTENING FOR PRIVILEGE

To varying degrees, university classrooms are sites of privilege. The rising costs of tuition and the competitive nature of admissions policies have created an atmosphere where students without the financial or academic credentials are often unable to further their studies. Likewise among primary and secondary schools, some districts and certain schools represent privilege and wealth more than others. Both privilege and the lack thereof are issues in the classroom. But the classroom as pluralist space can be a site for recognizing and examining privilege.

In the United States, where our history is tied to both slavery of African Americans and injustice toward Native American peoples, perhaps the most important place to begin is with the privilege tied to skin color. Beyond teaching about the negative effects of racism, it is important to take the next step to interrogate whiteness. Emilie Townes proposes just this when she points out that "the notion of race has been collapsed into this uninterrogated coloredness by academic, economic, ethical, social, theological and political arguments." She goes on to say the focus has been on "darker-skinned peoples almost exclusively" as the social construction of whiteness is ignored. The bottom line, Townes argues, is that whiteness benefits white people. Therefore our starting point should not be with racism, but with the social construction of whiteness, which has created and perpetuated racism.[5]

We seek out marginalized voices in the classroom not only through the careful choice of texts, but also the use of ethnographies, or life stories.

What does this look like in the classroom? Townes suggests seven "moral benchmarks" that can provide a starting point for an analysis of race and racism. Among these benchmarks, Townes gives attention to building community through a willingness to risk, emphasizes new patterns of understanding that require a lifetime of practice, and points out the importance of naming one's social

location. We must admit that we are both "victim and perpetrator" on conscious and unconscious levels. Townes's sixth benchmark applies equally to both teachers and students: "as individuals, you must be willing to be changed, grow, admit your participation and your resistance to race and racing in the communities of the classroom, the church, the society, the academy, the city. It is far too easy to project onto others that which you do not work on within yourself."[6] She encourages her readers to examine their own social location in light of the social locations of others both inside the classroom and beyond its walls. Unlike a comparative approach that merely contrasts the "other" with the dominant culture, when we interrogate the meaning of whiteness in the classroom, we can teach and learn in ways that interrogate racial hegemony.

Why should we balance listening and speaking in a pluralist classroom? We have an obligation to create space not only for individual voice finding, but also for communal moral formation.

The privilege that is associated with race and racism is not the only sort of privilege we should listen for in the classroom. We must also listen for the ways that prejudices of gender, sexual orientation, imperialism, and socioeconomic class shape teaching and learning. What distorting myths about women, the poor, individuals who are gay or straight, or people who live in the Two-Thirds World do we bring into the classroom and let stand in the way of our fulfilling moral obligations to one other? As these stereotypes arise in the classroom and interfere with our seeking the truth, we must take the time to explore why they exist.

To debunk such myths, it helps to ask, who has the authority in the conversation? To whom must we listen? Theorists refer to this authority as "epistemological privilege" in the conversation. As an example of this strategy, postcolonial theologians remind us that while there is a place for the former colonized and the former colonizers in each conversation, the former colonized must be given epistemological privilege.[7] By shifting the privilege to them, by realizing that the locus of authority may not belong to anyone present in the classroom, we become aware of some of our socioeconomic myths as we abdicate authority that is not rightly earned. We can more rightly discern international justice when the locus of authority is not the scholar or teacher, but the story of a woman who picks tea leaves in Kenya, or the story of a child orphaned by HIV/AIDS in Haiti. When these voices are given epistemological priority, our own ways of knowing are reshaped through hearing their stories.

LISTENING THROUGH ACTIVISM AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

In every classroom, regardless of the subject being taught, connections can be made to historic or present injustice. As a result, every course can include activism and experiential learning, two important resources for learning. In my course on HIV/AIDS, students submit their group project as a podcast (rather than a written assignment or class presentation), which we broadcast through a university Web channel. As their assignments are shared with the wider community, the students' motivation can potentially leave the realm of "work for grades" and enter the realm of "work for justice."

Similarly, components of experiential learning within the course design can remove students' grade-oriented focus as they find opportunities to bridge the gap between the classroom and the community. The immediate goal of this type of learning and activism is not to change the world but to help students develop moral habits. The ten hours of community service they log may do little for the service agencies they assist, but it may have a significant impact on the students' moral formation. As students and teachers connect the content of the course to the injustices of the world, they can find spaces of solidarity by stepping outside of their comfort zones and confronting structures of privilege and power.

Beverley Haddad, a theologian and Episcopal priest in the KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa, is a model of an "activist-intellectual." She has created a Bible study for women in rural Vulindlela, South Africa, in which participants use drama, art, and other voice-finding activities to confront the unspeakable issues like rape and HIV/AIDS that are present within their culture. Haddad articulates two goals that are applicable to teachers in pluralistic classrooms. One goal is to create "conscientization," or the awareness of one's own situation, as students become aware of oppression and privilege. The other goal is to "unify and structure" understandings so that students, following the teacher's lead, become "boundary-crossers" who, in the classroom, inhabit both worlds of the privileged and the oppressed.[8]

LISTENING AS SOLIDARITY

In a classroom in our pluralist culture, why should we balance listening and speaking in the ways mentioned above? We have an obligation to create space not only for individual voice finding, but also for communal moral formation.

The promise of an ethics of listening in the classroom is that students and teachers learn to *hear one another into speech*.[9] As we learn to listen both to marginalized voices and to our own places of privilege, the classroom becomes a space to cultivate peace and discern the contours of our common moral obligations. As we listen together through activism and experiential learning, we develop a solidarity of listening that can lead to justice beyond the classroom walls.

NOTES

1 Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 44.

2 Miguel De La Torre, "Rejecting Euroamerican Ethics for a Latino/a Ethics of Jodiendo," paper given at Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting, January 9, 2009.

3 See, for instance, Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), and Musa Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000).

4 See Rosemary Edet and Bette Ekeya, "Church Women of Africa: A Theological Community," in *With Passion and Compassion*, edited by Virginia Fabella, M. M., and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 4; and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters Of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (New York: Orbis, 1995), 82.

5 Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 60.

6 Ibid., 78-79.

7 For more on this, see Beverly Haddad, "Faith Resources and Sites as Critical to Participatory Learning with Rural South African Women," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion,* 22:1 (2006): 135-154.

8 Ibid.

9 Nelle Morton develops this image of hearing one another into speech in *The Journey Is Home* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985).

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Schooling the Young into Goodness

BY DARIN H. DAVIS
AND PAUL J. WADELL

Moral education should provide the young with an understanding of life worthy of themselves—a compelling account of goodness and how to achieve it. If we ask the young only to pursue their desires, should we be surprised if, instead of being uplifted by the freedom we hold out to them, they become bored and disenchanted?

What is the good life? How should we live if we are to be truly happy? Though questions like these may seem to some people today either quaint or misplaced, they are the most important questions that any program of moral education can ask. Indeed, that these questions strike some as helplessly old-fashioned only suggests how estranged we are from what once was considered a given.

What would it be to recover the founding inspiration of moral education? What would its features be? To begin, moral education should be an initiation into a way of life; it should be about schooling the young into habits and practices that will form them in the distinctive excellences of human beings. Those charged with the responsibility of helping the young grow into goodness should teach them to love what is best and to nurture aspirations that are truly worthy. They should strive to cultivate in the young a resilient passion for justice, a costly compassion, and the abiding conviction that fulfillment comes not when our lives are guided by calculated self-interest, but when we expend ourselves for the sake of others. In its most basic terms, moral education is about forming character and changing hearts; it is about offering the young something noble and magnanimous towards which to aspire.

But in a society that embraces its pluralism, we are often reluctant to take up these important tasks because they involve making normative judgments about different ways of life, the practices we should adopt, and the behavior we ought to embrace. Accordingly, we tell students they should clarify their values, but do not tell them why they should value one thing over something else. We make freedom of choice the sovereign good, but then give students little idea of why what they choose might matter. And we tell them to be open to different views—and above all to be tolerant—but often in ways that makes truth seem both expendable and negotiable.

Contrary to the view that claims about the good life are unfashionable or off-limits, the fundamental task of moral education should be providing the young with an understanding of life worthy of themselves—a coherent and compelling account of the good life and how one must live in order to achieve it. The young should be called to an adventure that is both challenging and promising precisely because if they undertake it, they will be transformed in ways that will make them exquisite in goodness and, therefore, rich in happiness.

Such a way of reenvisioning moral education might seem hopelessly idealistic—even irritatingly dogmatic—in an age skittish about making substantive moral claims. But embracing an anemic approach to moral education inevitably results in emptiness and disillusionment. If the moral life asks nothing more of the young than that they pursue their desires, ought we be surprised if, instead of being uplifted by the freedom we hold out to them, they become bored and disenchanted? If we extol personal autonomy and encourage the young to craft a life of their own, yet do not provide them with the form of life and communities that make a good life possible, should we wonder why they find themselves increasingly lonely and aimless?

Traditionally, this crippling disillusionment, and the malaise that results from it, has been called *acedia*, one of the seven deadly sins that were seen to be especially toxic for one's soul and spirit.[1] Acedia literally means to be without care, to be infused with an apathy and indifference rooted in the numbing conviction that nothing really matters. Young people today often manifest many of the symptoms of acedia, a fact that is not surprising since acedia is one of the most striking characteristics of the present age. Further, because we have done little to show young people why they will discover themselves and be fulfilled not in lives of comfort and self-promotion, but in devotion to something greater than themselves, it is not surprising that this is so. This is why the moral education of the young must first confront the toxins of acedia that infect so many of us in ways we hardly notice.

THE TOXIC POWER OF ACEDIA

Acedia was a prominent theme in the writings of the desert monks in the early Middle Ages. Often called the "noonday demon," acedia descended on monks who began to find the rhythms and routines of monastic life

not uplifting and inspiring, but monotonous and tedious. Bored by the repetitions that are at the heart of the monastic life, in the "noonday sun" of their vocation, the monks not only grew distracted by the lure of other possibilities, but also questioned the value of their life. Couldn't there be better ways to seek God? Couldn't they love and serve their neighbors best if they were not cloistered behind the walls of desert monasteries? Aren't there more urgent things to do than to recite psalms several times a day, week after week and year after year? In the throes of acedia, the desert monks were tempted to abandon the vocation to which God had called them, and to which they had once been passionately committed, for what they thought would be more fulfilling possibilities. Consumed by tedium, they could no longer focus on a life devoted to praising God, and thus let lesser things bewitch them.

But medieval monks were hardly the only ones to be captured by the wiles of acedia. We see its presence today in the sadness and disillusionment that descend upon persons who no longer believe great things are possible in life. We see it in the deep listlessness of spirit that characterizes persons who move through life engaged by nothing hopeful or worthwhile because they believe such things no longer exist or, if they do, they cannot possibly be attained. Acedia is a diffusive and debilitating sadness—a pervasive spirit of dejection—that eventually gives rise to despair. It is a crippling melancholy that dominates the lives of those who abandon aspirations to moral and spiritual excellence, and replace them with an endless series of stimulating and pleasant distractions.

In *The Seven Deadly Sins Toda*y, Henry Fairlie describes acedia as "a morbid inertia" that can totally shut down a person's life because he or she long ago stopped believing that life might involve something more, something better, something of such consummate goodness that it demanded their utmost devotion.[2] Dulled by the stupor of acedia, we renounce great hopes and grand ambitions for lives that move relentlessly from one activity, one distraction, one titillating triviality to the next. Moreover, because we are busy, stimulated, active, and entertained, we are hardly aware of how empty and meaningless our lives have become, or of the morally and spiritually dangerous predicament in which we have placed ourselves. Do we fear boredom more than meaninglessness because we no

Young people often manifest the symptoms of acedia—an apathy and indifference rooted in the numbing conviction that nothing really matters. This is not surprising since acedia is one of the most striking characteristics of the present age.

longer believe there is a grander purpose to life or a truly magnanimous possibility? Are we committed to distracting ourselves through the rest of our lives because there is nothing beyond a cascade of distractions to make us, if only momentarily, feel alive?

Acedia is a moral and spiritual torpor that flows from a loss of belief in anything truly worthwhile and promising, anything genuinely ennobling and good; it is no wonder that young persons today are afflicted with it. The world we adults have bequeathed to them has in many ways stifled their natural sense of wonder and joy and dampened their innate hope about life's possibilities. Students may begin their educational journey seeking something better, something truly magnanimous. But along the way disenchantment and disillusionment settle in because they have taken to heart society's message that economic success and social acceptance matter more than moral and spiritual excellence. Students are malleable and impressionable. If they hear from us that they must put heroic ambitions aside, and that they can hardly afford to count on others in a society that prizes self-reliance, then it is not surprising that their magnanimity is replaced by acedia and their idealism by expedience. Such an unfortunate transformation reflects not an inevitable and wise adjustment to reality, but what is bound to happen when they are taught to aim for nothing more than lives of "comfortable survival."[3] Why should we expect them to pursue lives characterized by compassionate service on behalf of others when we have given them a world whose primary idols are pleasure, power, and wealth, rather than charity and justice?

The primary aim of moral education should be to present students with a magnanimous way of life, one that will enable them to aspire to and achieve the greatness for which they, as God's very images, were created to enjoy. That we characteristically forsake this aim for less challenging and less promising goals reveals that the moral and spiritual dejection of soul that is the handiwork of acedia runs rampant in our educational structures and institutions. Brian Hook and Rusty Reno capture this when they contend that "our age is allergic to heroic ambition and inured to the attractions of excellence."[4] We witnessed this not long ago when one of our students remarked on a course evaluation that while the course material was mildly interesting, "I just want to live my life and not waste it questioning everything." Like this student, there are many others who, by the time they reach the college classroom, have wholly imbibed the casual nihilism and calculated indifference characteristic of acedia. The problem is not that they seek job security, professional certification, and economic survival, but that they often seek nothing more. Like the adults who have formed them, these students, plugged into cell phones, iPods, and Facebook, "float on an ocean of pleasant distraction."[5]

Moreover, we see acedia at work when we ask students questions about the justification of their moral views or the reasonableness of belief in God.

Frequently they respond with the all-too-familiar line, "Who's to say? It's just a matter of opinion." Though such responses may reveal a rather unsophisticated form of relativism at work, more often than not they bespeak a deeper and more dangerous indifference about questions that traditionally have been regarded as ultimately important for life. If this is so, the real challenge, revealed through the torpor of acedia, is convincing them that these questions matter at all, and that a life that fails to wrestle with them is morally and spiritually impoverished.

How can the affliction of acedia be explained? What accounts for its ubiquity? One reason acedia is so pervasive is that we no longer believe in the supremacy of a magnanimous life; put differently, we are reluctant to judge one way of life better than another. Consequently, we implicitly (and sometimes quite explicitly) communicate to students that an individual's desires, needs, choices, and beliefs are beyond judgment. What matters is not whether those desires and needs are worthy, those choices good, or those beliefs true; rather, all that matters is that they are one's own. Personal identity and authenticity are secured not through a way of life capable of making one wise, honest, and good, but through self-expression, even though how we choose to express ourselves might change every day. In this milieu, the only way to fail is to be inauthentic. But this is virtually impossible because authenticity is achieved not by following a normative ideal or by submitting one's life to a moral or religious exemplar. Rather, authenticity is inherently self-bestowed because it consists in nothing more than following one's own truth and honoring one's own experience. It is unthinkable that one's truth might be little more than fantasy or one's experience impoverished, much less morally dangerous. After all, there is no higher truth by which all truths must be judged and no accounts of human excellence that might reveal some experiences to be shallow and foolish. This is the harvest of acedia, a collapse into a relativism and individualism so encompassing that few stop to consider the absurdity and despair into which they lead us. If there is nothing more than "one's own truth" and no meaning to be found in any experience other than the stultifying realization that it is one's own, nothing finally matters.

Why should we expect students to pursue lives characterized by compassionate service when we have given them a world whose primary idols are pleasure, power, and wealth, rather than charity and justice?

But acedia is also nurtured and reinforced by cynicism. There are many ways cynicism is expressed, but one of the most harmful manifestations is distrust of anything that is noble, heroic, or magnanimous; in other words,

it is cynicism about goodness. Seen through the twisted lens of cynicism, motives that appear to be genuinely benevolent are not only scrutinized, but also judged as tainted, and lives that seem to be dedicated to serving others are exposed as reinforcing structures of domination and oppression. When cynicism prevails, every saint is a stooge or collaborator, every hero a rascal in disguise. Nothing good, excellent, or holy is as pure as it seems, says the gospel of cynicism. No one would really prefer a life of disinterested service rather than a life of self-advancement, cynicism counsels. Thus, instead of emulating the good persons, we dismiss them as fools or frauds. This cynical disenchantment with anyone who strives to be heroic in goodness or holiness is clearly conducive to acedia. But the result of a loss of belief in genuine goodness is only greater cynicism, because after having exposed all aspirations for excellence as fraudulent, we are left with a humanity that not only is mired in mediocrity, but also is held hostage to its worst impulses.

BREAKING FREE OF ACEDIA

How then do we break free from the tentacles of acedia? How should we confront and overcome its life-robbing power? Perhaps the most promising antidote to acedia is to become diligent about cultivating in students a passionate love for and enduring attraction to the good. We begin to overcome the malaise of acedia when we affirm to young people that the fundamental human vocation is to respond to the appeal of goodness. That is a call entrusted to every one of us. Human beings are created to seek what is best, made to hunger for what is true and good and beautiful, because goodness completes and perfects us, particularly the unexcelled goodness that is God. Indeed, the most enduring appetite of our lives is for goodness because goodness, whether found in a flower, a symphony, a poem, or a person, calls us out of ourselves in relation to something else. Unlike acedia, which collapses us in on ourselves and bottoms out in despair, goodness summons us to transcend ourselves in love, service, sacrifice, and faithful devotion. This is why we are happiest not when we struggle to be sure that everything always works to our own best advantage, but when we generously give ourselves for the sake of others. It is why we find joy through acts of kindness and thoughtfulness. Goodness expands our lives because it draws us up and out of ourselves in love of something other than ourselves. That "other" can be a sunset, a spouse, a son or daughter, a pet, a stranger, or God. A life spent seeking, responding to, and being fulfilled in goodness culminates in joy because it is through goodness, especially the goodness of holiness, that each of us achieves the excellence most proper to human beings.

Goodness appeals to us every day of our lives in manifold and fascinating ways, if only we have eyes to see. Goodness calls to us in the patient and faithful love of those who care for us, as well as in the love and affection we are summoned to show them. It calls to us in the face of a child, in the affliction of those who are suffering, and in the opportunities we have to attend

to those who are lonely, sad, or troubled. Each of these is a call to move out of ourselves in love. Goodness speaks to us in laughter and leisure, in friendship and companionship, in prayer and contemplation, and through the discipline it takes to do anything well. Goodness makes its appeal through the truths we discover in great literature, in theology and philosophy, in music and the arts. But it also makes its appeal when we are presented with opportunities to be compassionate, to be patient and forgiving, and to be just and generous. Acedia is overcome through the endless conversions of our lives through which we move out of ourselves by turning to the good. In the Christian life, acedia is overcome as we turn toward Christ and follow him in faithful discipleship, a life that is hopeful precisely because it promises to transfigure us in goodness.

There are many ways to make goodness attractive to young persons. In *Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose*, Brian Mahan speaks of "an epiphany of recruitment."[6] He is referring to moments in our lives where we experience being drawn beyond ourselves, moments where we experience a summons to devote ourselves to something challenging and costly, but also captivating and compelling. And we want to respond to these appeals not only because they speak to what is best in us, but also because they reveal to us that happiness comes through giving ourselves for the sake of something demanding and heroic. In "epiphanies of recruitment" we discover that the best lives are found not in "comfortable survival," but in great enterprises worthy of the gift of ourselves. Jesus' first followers had an "epiphany of recruitment" when Jesus invited them to "Come and see." Like the disciples, instead of fearing or fleeing such moments, we should encourage students to embrace them and to recognize in them an invitation to a different—and much more promising—way of life.

Perhaps the most promising antidote to acedia is to become diligent about cultivating in students a passionate love for and enduring attraction to the good.

But ultimately students will discover in themselves a passionate love for the good only if they see it embodied in us. We will not make goodness attractive to them by talking about it—by endless moralizing or tiresome preaching. We will only inspire them to seek and to love the good when they see zeal for the good reflected in who we are and what we do. Students need models and mentors of goodness. They need to *see* the good in order to *love* the good. This is always the case, but is especially so in a culture of acedia. They will hardly be enflamed in their love for the good and they will hardly appreciate its beauty or believe its power, if they see in us the same diffidence we are urging them to discard. The emptiness of acedia will be fully

exposed to young persons not when we lecture them about goodness, but when we live it, and through living it show them why it is the only true path to happiness and fulfillment. The lure of goodness will captivate them when they see how it has deepened and transformed our own lives, and when they see the rich joy that can be found in steadfast love and costly commitments. Put differently, we help them overcome the toxins of acedia through the witness of our lives. In this respect, there is no better antidote to acedia than spiritual friendships and churches marked by faithful discipleship.

VIRTUES FOR THE JOURNEY

Our fundamental responsibility in the moral education of the young is to invite them to a way of life that can best be described as an ongoing quest of seeking the good in order to become good. But because the nature of any quest is to be challenging, the way out of acedia demands that students today strive to acquire the virtues. Virtues are the habits of being and acting, and the qualities of character, that equip us to succeed in the quest for goodness. They are the skills we need to achieve excellence in goodness. All of the virtues are important, but in light of our analysis of acedia, three seem especially crucial: magnanimity, courage, and friendship.

If overcoming acedia hinges on transforming our desires and redirecting some of our ambitions, then it is important that we encourage young persons to become magnanimous. Magnanimity is the virtue that habituates us in aspirations for excellence. Literally meaning to be of "great soul" or "great spirit," magnanimous persons always aspire to what is best, always reach for what is truly excellent and worthy of their lives, and refuse to "lower their sights" to less promising possibilities. With magnanimity, we become persons who reject puny ambitions and middling hopes, and instead focus our lives on purposes, projects, and goals that demand that we expend ourselves for the sake of something noble. Magnanimity teaches that we find happiness not through self-gratification, not through lives of ease and comfort, and certainly not through wealth, fame, or celebrity, but in risking costly and heroic loves. Indeed, the magnanimous person knows that we grow as humans in the measure that we extend ourselves on behalf of some transcendent purpose. Thus, contrary to acedia, the virtue of magnanimity suggests that our fundamental error is not that we hope for too much, but that we settle for so little.[7]

This should be a central and recurring message that we convey to young persons. And, more than we may sometimes believe, it is what they want to hear. As Brian Mahan suggests, despite displaying all the signs of acedia, students actually "seem to desire something deeper, something more idealistic, something different from what they were told constituted success American style."[8] They want to believe that lives devoted to service, compassion, justice, and goodness are better than lives continually centered on gratifying the whims of the self. They distrust what they have been taught about what

constitutes a good and successful life because they have seen how that leads to moral and spiritual dead ends. They want us to challenge them. They want us to summon them to raise their sights to the most unsurpassable possibilities available to human beings. And whether they tell us or not, they know if we fail to call them to be magnanimous, then we have failed them deeply.

Second, there is no way out of acedia without courage. Courage helps us deal with all the things in ourselves, in others, and in society that hinder our pursuit of moral excellence. Courage is not needed to sustain one in trivial conceptions of life because trivial narratives of life require nothing of us. It takes no courage to remain steadfast in ways of life that demand no sacrifice, no transcending of one's self, but whose only aim is to comfort and reassure the self. But narratives characterized by ambitions for moral and spiritual excellence cannot be embodied without courage precisely because they demand the transformation and transcending of one's self in faithful and exquisite love. The education of young people must include formation in courage because without this virtue we cannot persevere in our pursuit of authentic happiness and goodness amidst the lure of more immediately gratifying possibilities. With courage, we find the resolve necessary to appraise counterfeit narratives of human fulfillment as the illusions they truly are, and the resolve to continue our initiation into goodness with both hope and joy.

When the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas was writing about perseverance, an important aspect of courage, he said that perseverance helps us endure in the pursuit of any difficult good.[9] Aquinas had in mind the perseverance that is required to seek the kingdom of God and to aspire to a life of friendship with God. But perseverance is a quintessential element in any magnanimous life precisely because it is hard to aspire to greatness in goodness day after day. The path out of acedia and into goodness is long and challenging, one that we are frequently tempted to abandon. This is why Aquinas also said, regarding perseverance, that its "action should continue through life."[10] He recognized that our growth in goodness is always a work in progress, and that it is not without struggle and hardship, and even moments of failure. But with perseverance we do not allow our shortcomings, temptations, or failures to sidetrack us or to diminish our zeal for goodness, no matter how long acquiring it may take.

Finally, a most promising way to overcome the cynicism and malaise engendered by acedia is through friendship. This may seem an odd conclusion because while we may appreciate our friends, we might not think of them as essential elements to a life of virtue. But consider what happens to us in the best relationships of our lives. If acedia shrinks our world by turning us in on ourselves, friendship expands our world by calling us out of ourselves and teaching us how to care for others for their own sake. Indeed, instead of being captive to the dispiriting effects of acedia, friendship liberates us by challenging us to see beyond the pinched horizons of self-concern and self-interest by asking us to identify with the

good of others. The ordinary life of an ordinary friendship is morally important because indispensable qualities of character—qualities such as thoughtfulness, generosity, compassion, patience, and forgiveness—are developed in us in the crucible of friendship. If Aristotle was right in claiming that we become good by spending time with good people, then it is not amiss to focus the moral education of students on developing the kinds of relationships that he called friendships of virtue or character.

Moreover, friendship is important in the moral life because friends—and good communities—help us stay focused on and committed to what is best for us. If we envision the moral life as an ongoing training in goodness, it is easy to imagine how any one of us could grow weary and disheartened because the good we seek is hard to attain and never completely in our grasp. How do we persevere when the goal of the quest continually eludes us? We do so through the support, encouragement, counsel, and companionship of friends who pursue the quest for goodness with us. We do not persevere alone; we persevere *together*, because anything difficult is more easily managed when others share in it with us and, like us, are convinced of its value. Thus, we will help students resist the debilitating effects of acedia when we model for them—and teach them how to develop—the friendships through which they can help each other remain resolute in seeking the most hopeful and excellent possibilities for their lives.[11]

CONCLUSION

No one is called to become rich or powerful or beautiful or famous. But they are called to become good. Goodness is the way out of acedia because to grow in goodness and to aspire to what is best is everyone's vocation. This is why education should be a thoroughly moral enterprise. We should want young persons to become excellent students, students who can dazzle us with their knowledge and expertise. But we should also want them to become excellent human beings, young men and women who dazzle us as well with their commitment to justice, their compassion for others, and their tireless devotion to something greater than their selves. If acedia bedevils us, and if the young are especially vulnerable to it, then helping to initiate students into a way of life that is truly worthy of them should be the central task of moral education in a pluralist culture. There is no more noble aim, and certainly nothing more urgent, than to encourage students to see that moral and spiritual excellence is not impossibly beyond their reach, but is the very thing for which they are made and through which they will be fulfilled.[12]

NOTES

1 A recent and astute analysis of acedia is Kathleen Norris's *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008).

2 Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 113.

3 Brian S. Hook and Russell R. Reno, *Heroism & The Christian Life: Reclaiming Excellence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 212.

4 Ibid., 211.
5 Ibid., 212.
6 Brian J. Mahan, *Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose: Vocation and the Ethics of Ambition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002), 20.
7 On this point see Paul J. Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 57.
8 Mahan, *Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose*, 30.
9 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q 137, A 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).
10 Ibid.
11 Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life*, 29-34.
12 A longer and slightly different version of this essay appeared as "Tracking the Toxins of *Acedia:* Reenvisioning Moral Education," in Douglas V. Henry and Michael D. Beaty, eds., *The Schooled Heart: Moral Formation in American Higher Education* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 133-153.

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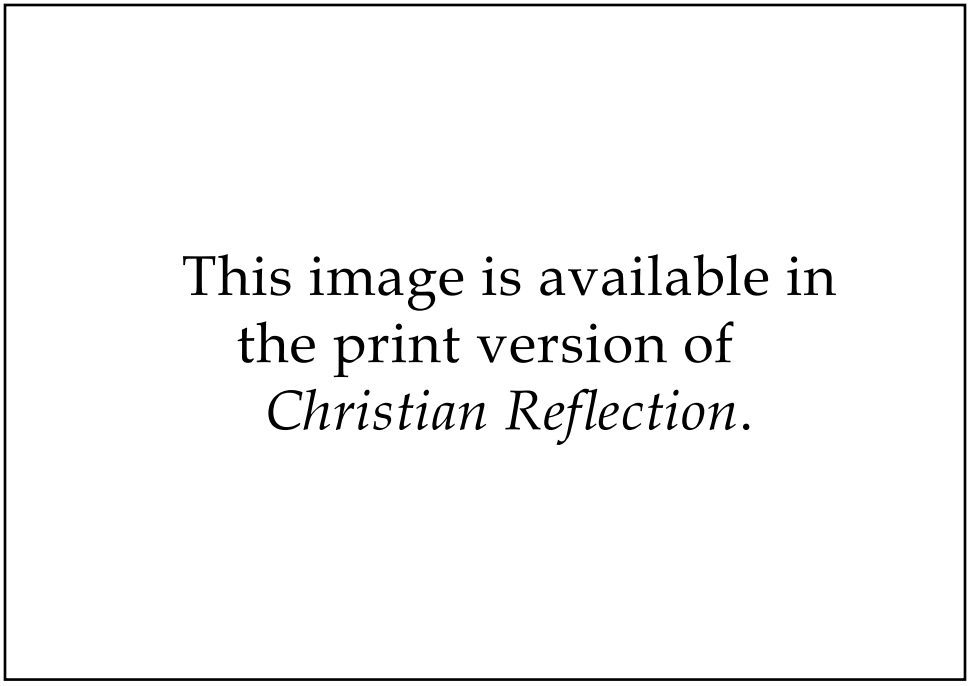


SCHOOL OF ATHENS embodies Raphael's profound vision: the pursuit of knowledge requires a conversation among friends that unites the disciplines across centuries and human cultures.

Raphael (1486-1520), *SCHOOL OF ATHENS* (1509-1512). *Fresco, 19' x 27'. Stanza della Segnatura, Stanze di Raffaello, Vatican Palace, Vatican State. Photo: © Scala / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.*

Pursuing Knowledge

BY HEIDI J. HORNIK

In school hallways and classrooms around the world today, reproductions of Raphael's *School of Athens* are displayed to encourage the pursuit of knowledge. This famous Italian Renaissance painting represents philosophy, one of the four main branches of knowledge, by depicting the most well-known intellectuals of the ancient world gathered around the central figures of Plato and Aristotle.

Pope Julius II della Rovere summoned the young architect and painter Raphael, who was known as the great assimilator, to decorate the Pope's private apartments. The *School of Athens* fresco is in a room that served as a library in the sixteenth century (it does not have a fireplace as is usually found in salons and bedrooms of that period). Called the *Stanza della Segnatura* (Room of the Signature) because for a period it was where papal documents were signed, it now is part of the Vatican Museum.[1]

The paintings in the room were designed to be a teaching tool about the nature of human knowledge. On the vaulted ceiling, four *tondi* (round paintings) personify the central disciplines of Theology, Poetry, Philosophy, and Jurisprudence, in correspondence with the rectangular frescoes on the walls below. The fresco that exemplifies theology, the *Disputà* (Disputation), probably was the first to be painted. Here Raphael uses a typical Renaissance composition with three clear horizontal divisions. The upper area is an illusionistic vault that includes God the Father. The middle area depicts Christ, who is enthroned with the Virgin and St. John by his side, and seated prophets and martyrs arranged on a group of clouds. The lower area represents the Church, with the Eucharist present on an altar. Around the altar, the Church Fathers discuss the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In *Parnassus*, the fresco on the adjacent wall that depicts poetry and probably was painted next, we see a great trans-historical gathering of poets, nine from antiquity and nine from contemporary times, on the hill made famous by Apollo whose music enraptured the Muses. The fourth fresco, corresponding to jurisprudence, is painted around a window. Above the window the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Temperance, and Fortitude are depicted; on either side of the window are images of Pope Gregory IX (c. 1145-1241) and Justinian I (483-565), Emperor of Byzantium, delivering decrees. Raphael positioned *School of Athens* directly across the room from *Disputà* so that

the two groups, Church theologians and ancient philosophers, might engage one another in intellectual discussion.

The balanced, symmetrical composition in *School of Athens* has become known as the ideal of formal and spatial harmony. Plato and Aristotle are framed by an arch that extends into a coffered barrel vault—a perfectly perspected Roman Doric structure. *Grisaille* statues of Apollo and Minerva, the ancient gods of the arts and wisdom, appear to the left and right of the immense architecture.

Center Detail. Photo: © Scala / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.

Looking closer at the central figures (p. 48), we see Plato (427-347 BC) is holding a copy of his *Timaeus*, which describes the origin and nature of the universe, and pointing upward to indicate that his insights come from the realm of un-changing Ideas.[2] His student Aristotle (384-322 BC) holds in his left hand the *Nicomachean Ethics* in which he presents human nature as the basis for morality; his other hand, in contrast to Plato's, is lowered toward the earth to symbolize learning from experience. The isolated figure reclining on the steps in the foreground may be the cynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (412-323 BC) or Socrates (c. 469-399 BC).[3]

In the group of figures on the right side of the composition (p. 49), the second-century Greek astronomer Ptolemy holds a celestial globe. Just in front of him the geometer Euclid (fourth century BC) bends over to draw a circle with a compass for his pupils. The face of Euclid is a portrait of the High Renaissance architect Bramante (1444-1514), who was engaged by Pope Julius II to design the Basilica of St. Peter. Raphael painted his self-portrait in the personage in the black beret on the far right in the lowest level; the twenty-five-year-old artist looks out at his audience.

Raphael made numerous preparatory drawings for *School of Athens* to work out the spatial relationships among the figures and develop the individuality of their gestures. His goal was to create an activated and lively intellectual debate. Yet, despite all of his advance preparation, Raphael appears to have made a last-minute addition to the plan. His large cartoon for the lower band of figures that would allow him to transfer their gestures

proportionally to the wall does not contain the foreground individual dressed in purple and gold. This lonely individual, who is making notes on a sheet of paper while leaning on a block of marble, resembles Raphael's older contemporary Michelangelo (1475-1574), who had been working on the neighboring Sistine Chapel ceiling from 1508 to 1511. Raphael probably saw the Sistine Chapel when it was opened to the rest of Rome in August 1511. One theory is that he returned to his own work and paid tribute to Michelangelo by placing him in the *School of Athens*.[4] It was clear to everyone who saw the Sistine ceiling that Michelangelo had a new style with a massive power unlike anything in the High Renaissance.

Behind the apparent complexity of Raphael's intellectual program for the frescos in the Pope's library is this simple, but profound insight: the pursuit of knowledge requires a conversation among friends that unites the disciplines across centuries and human cultures. The *School of Athens*, which most clearly embodies this vision, has much to teach students in our own schools today.

Right Detail. Photo: © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.

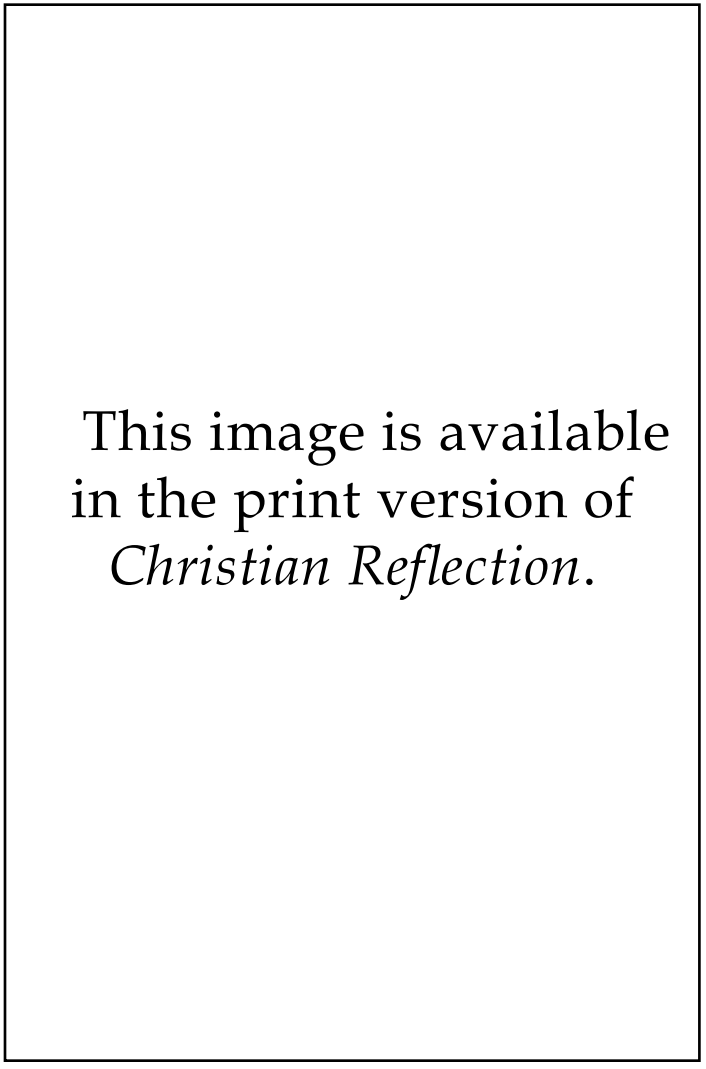
NOTES

1 A virtual tour of this famous room and Raphael's frescos is available online at the Web site of the Vatican Museum (*http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/SDR/SDR_03_SalaSegn.html*).

2 In identifying the figures in *School of Athens* I follow Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 524. The identification of figures in this work is difficult because Raphael did not leave any personal notes on his program. For an alternative identification of several figures see Daniel Orth Bell, "New Identifications in Raphael's 'School of Athens,'" *The Art Bulletin* 77:4 (December 1, 1995).

3 This figure is a source for numerous reclining figures. For its use by Pontormo (1484-1556) in the *Visitation*, see Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Illuminating Luke: The Infancy Narrative in Italian Renaissance Painting,* volume 1 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 87, n. 70.

4 Hartt and Wilkins, 525.



Stradano's The Practice of the Visual Arts provides a fascinating glimpse into the life of the Accademia del Disegno, one of the first training schools for artists in the western tradition.

Jan van der Straet (1523-1605), Design for the print *The Practice of the Visual Arts* (1573). *Fresco, 437 x 239 mm. London, British Museum. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum. Used by permission.*

A School for Artists

BY HEIDI J. HORNIK

Today we think of artists, like other professionals, as going to a school to learn their craft and develop their style. But this is a peculiarly modern phenomenon in the western tradition. In the medieval era, an aspiring artist would apprentice with a master artist in a professional guild in order to learn the master's techniques and approach. Not until the sixteenth century did young artists attend more formal academic institutions that not only offered technical training but also encouraged a more theoretical approach to studying the goals and methods of art. Stradano's *The Practice of the Visual Arts* provides a fascinating glimpse into the life of one of the first academies, or training schools for artists, in the western tradition—the Accademia del Disegno founded in 1562 in Florence, Italy.

Among the leaders of the Accademia del Disegno was the artist and architect Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), who is often considered the first art historian because he wrote the first biography of artists in 1550 (revised in 1568).[1] Cosimo I de'Medici made Vasari his main consultant for renovating and updating Ducal Florence in the mid 1560s. Along with painters Agnolo Bronzino and Michele Tosini and sculptor Montorsoli, Vasari convinced Duke Cosimo to support an art school in which the curriculum would be based on *disegno*, or draftsmanship. Skill in drawing, they believed, is fundamental to good work in painting, sculpture, architecture, and other artistic media.

Unlike its local predecessor, the Accademia Florentina, this new academy was not intended to promote a vernacular style. Instead, it taught a range of techniques and theory in an organized curriculum ordered by its elected officials through statutes, and was funded by membership taxes. Initially it was something of a cross between a confraternity and a university studio art class, for more seasoned artists served as officers and the academy resembled a Christian men's group with a common goal of sharing their skills.[2] As the centuries passed, it developed solid academic tradition of combining the humanistic disciplines within a curriculum of art that was based on the ability to draw from nature.

Jan van der Straet (1523-1605) moved from his birthplace in Bruges, Flanders, to study art in Rome when he was twenty-two. In 1557 he settled

in Florence, where he was called by his Italian name, Giovanni Stradano. He was elected as an officer in the Accademia del Disegno during its first year, and again in 1586 and 1591. His leadership position in the new academy shows the full acculturation of this Flemish artist into the Florentine community.

In *The Practice of the Visual Arts*, Stradano depicts the complexities of studio training as the skeleton, several nudes (both live and sculptural), a model of a horse, a female figure dressed as Virtue, and a male figure posed as a river god are positioned to become part of the students' drawings.[3] This work, in both its theme and form, represents the curriculum of the Accademia del Disegno. Its theme is the centrality of drawing to the education of artists at the Academy, where students were trained to be more than craftsmen or skilled laborers, but to study shared principles of design and representation of nature. And, of course, Stradano's work is itself an example of such drawings from life.

As I have taught art history in the Art Department at Baylor University the past nineteen years, the importance of young artists mastering the foundational techniques of art has become increasingly clear. This is true, even though the concept-driven contemporary art scene can seem devoid of traditional methodology. Of course, Baylor's studio drawing classes are a bit less chaotic than the one Stradano depicts, but they still advance the goals of the great masters in schools like the Accademia del Disegno.

NOTES

1 Giorgio Vasari, *Le Opere di Gorgio Vasari: Le Vite de'più eccellent pittori, scultori ed architettori scritte da Giorgio Vasari pittore Aretino* (1568), edited by Gaetano Milanesi, 9 volumes (1568; reprinted Florence, Italy: Sansoni, 1885).

2 This phenomenon can be illustrated by the transition during this era of the Compagnia di San Luca—a guild of painters and miniaturists named after Luke, the patron saint of painters—into the Accademia di San Luca, an organization that trained lay people and was oriented toward works of piety.

3 Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Illuminating Luke: The Passion and Resurrection Narratives in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Painting*, volume 3 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2007), 97-100.

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God, You Give Each Generation

BY CAROLYN WINFREY GILLETTE

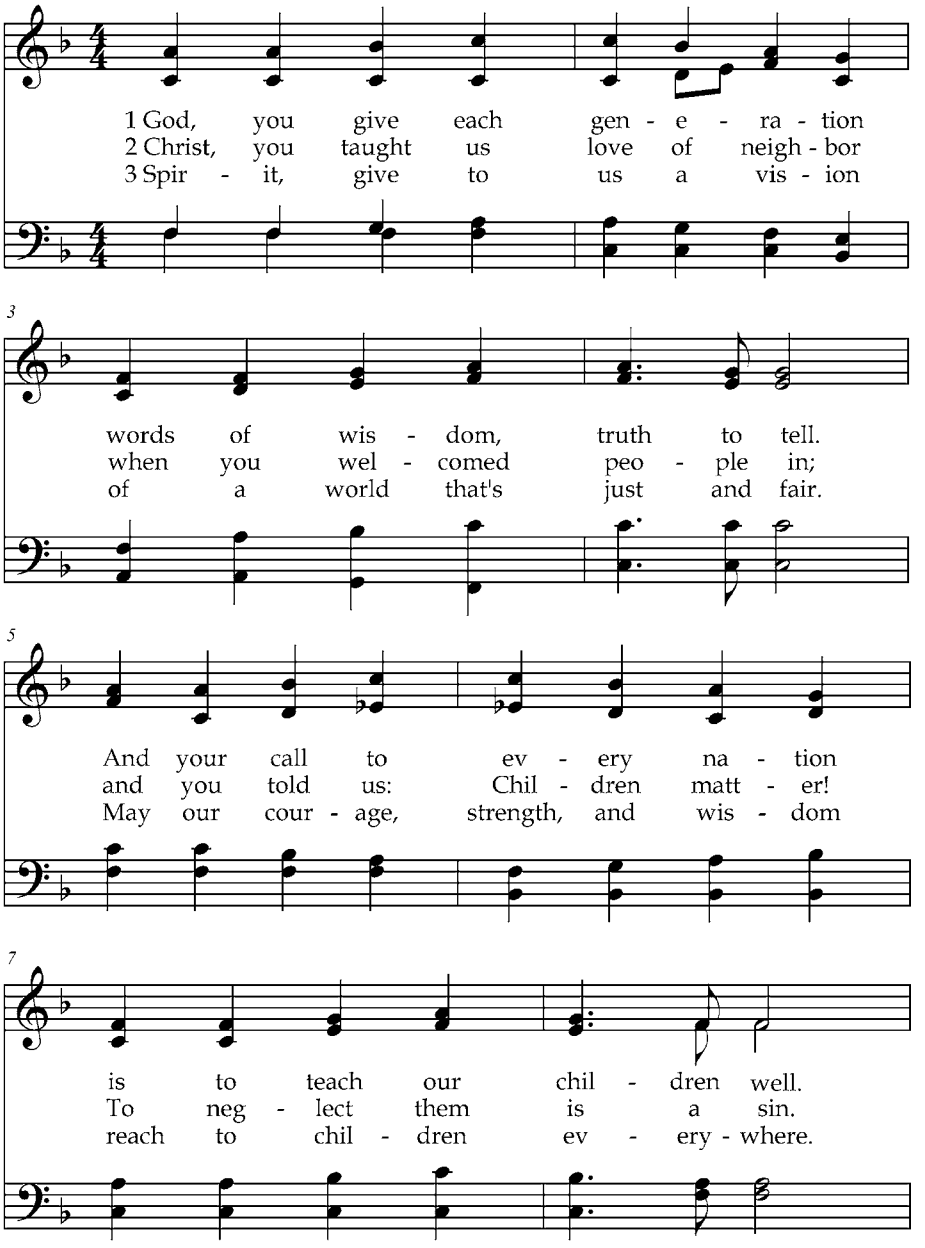
God, you give each generation
words of wisdom, truth to tell.
And your call to every nation
is to teach our children well.
For each child is in your image,
moving toward maturity.
Through your word, we hear your message:
Teach your children! Guide and lead!

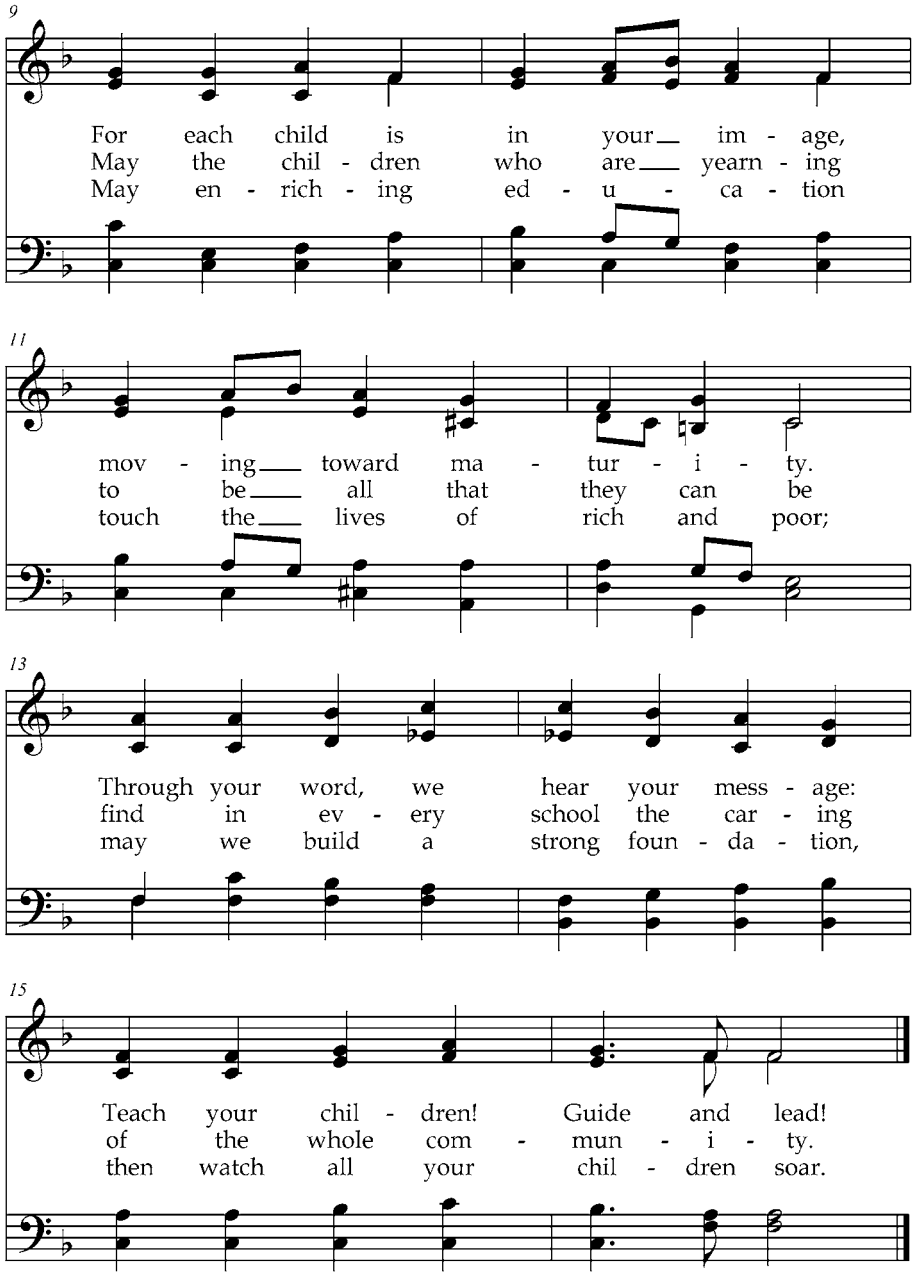
Christ, you taught us love of neighbor
when you welcomed people in;
and you told us: Children matter!
To neglect them is a sin.
May the children who are yearning
to be all that they can be
find in every school the caring
of the whole community.

Spirit, give to us a vision
of a world that's just and fair.
May our courage, strength, and wisdom
reach to children everywhere.
May enriching education
touch the lives of rich and poor;
may we build a strong foundation,
then watch all your children soar.

God, You Give Each Generation

CAROLYN WINFREY GILLETTE LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN





HYMN TO JOY
8.7.8.7.D.

Worship Service

BY ALLISON BURAS

Call to Worship: Psalm 19:7-10

The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the LORD are sure,
making wise the simple;
The precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.

Chiming of the Hour

Silent Meditation

When we teach our children to be good, to be gentle, to be forgiving (all these are attributes of God), to be generous, to love their fellow men, to regard this present age as nothing, we instill virtue in their souls, and reveal the image of God within them. This then is our task: to educate both our children and ourselves in godliness.

John Chrysostom (347-407)†

Introit Hymn

"Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us" (vv. 1-2)

Savior, like a Shepherd lead us,
much we need thy tender care;
in thy pleasant pastures feed us,
for our use thy folds prepare:
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
thou hast bought us, thine we are;
blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
thou hast bought us, thine we are.

We are thine; do thou befriend us,
be the guardian of our way;
keep thy flock, from sin defend us,
seek us when we go astray:
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
hear, O hear us when we pray;
blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,
hear O hear us when we pray.

Attributed to Dorothy A. Thrupp (1779-1847); *Hymns for the Young* (1836)
Tune: BRADBURY

The Witness of the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children's children, may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The Witness of the Gospels: Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country.

He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

The Word of the Lord for God's people.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn

"God, You Give Each Generation"

God, you give each generation
words of wisdom, truth to tell.
And your call to every nation
is to teach our children well.
For each child is in your image,
moving toward maturity.
Through your word, we hear your message:
Teach your children! Guide and lead!

Christ, you taught us love of neighbor
when you welcomed people in;
and you told us: Children matter!
To neglect them is a sin.
May the children who are yearning
to be all that they can be
find in every school the caring
of the whole community.

Spirit, give to us a vision
of a world that's just and fair.
May our courage, strength, and wisdom
reach to children everywhere.
May enriching education
touch the lives of rich and poor;
may we build a strong foundation,
then watch all your children soar.

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2009
Suggested Tunes: HYMN TO JOY *or* IN BABILONE
(pp. 53-55 of this volume)

Prayers of Confession

Lord, you are a loving teacher. You have instructed us through the Law and through the prophets, through your Word made flesh and through the teachings of the Apostles. Forgive us where we have been hard of heart and slow to yield to your teachings.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, you are our faithful provider. Through your grace you have placed saints and teachers in our lives, who have faithfully modeled life in your Kingdom before our very eyes. Forgive us where we have failed to follow the example of their thoughts, words, and deeds.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, you are our truthful guide. As members of your body you have called each of us to be a light to the world. Forgive us for when we have not shone forth the glory of your name.

Lord, have mercy.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Christ revealed his love to us in this,
that while we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us.
Hear, then Christ's word of grace to us:
Our sins are forgiven.

Children's Sermon and Blessing of the Teachers

The body of Christ, the Church, is like our bodies. How would you get along without a nose, without a foot, or without eyes? Each part of your body has a role to play and enriches your life. So it is with the Church. As you follow Christ, you will discover your gifts and vocational calling.

> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.
>
> *1 Corinthians 12: 27-31*

Today we are bestowing a blessing on the teachers in our congregation. (*Invite all teachers, in the church and in schools, to assemble before the congregation to receive a blessing from the children, who are invited to lay their hands upon the teachers.*) Let us pray:

> Almighty God, who calls and equips us each to serve your church,
> bless now these servants whom you have called to be teachers,
> that by word and good example,
> they may fulfill your purpose and glorify your name.
> We ask you, good Shepherd,
> to lead them in all things,
> even as they lead the flock you have entrusted to their care.
> We ask these things in the name of your son Jesus Christ,
> who taught us all to pray:
>
> **The Lord's Prayer (unison)**

Hymn

"Take Thou Our Minds, Dear Lord"

Take thou our minds, dear Lord, we humbly pray,
give us the mind of Christ each passing day;
teach us to know the truth that sets us free;
grant us in all our thoughts to honor thee.

Take thou our hearts, O Christ—they are thine own;
come thou within our souls and claim thy throne;
help us to shed abroad thy deathless love;
use us to make the earth like heaven above.

Take thou our wills, Most High! Hold thou full sway;
have in our inmost souls thy perfect way;
guard thou each sacred hour from selfish ease;
guide thou our ordered lives as thou dost please.

Take thou ourselves, O Lord, heart, mind, and will;
through our surrendered souls thy plans fulfill.
We yield ourselves to thee—time, talents, all;
we hear, and henceforth heed, thy sovereign call.

William H. Foulkes (1918)
Suggested Tunes: BREAD OF LIFE or ELLERS

Sermon

Offering

Passing the Peace of Christ

Benediction

May the peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God
and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord.

NOTE

† John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, translated by Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 44.

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One Makes All the Difference

BY VIRGIL GULKER

While most at-risk students do need help with academic skills, their greatest needs, according to their teachers, are emotional and social. KIDS HOPE USA gives resource-strapped schools a partnership with a compassionate resource in the community—the local church.

"At-risk children in our community don't need any more programs," observed the mayor of a city plagued by gang-related youth violence. "What they need is a caring adult to put an arm around their shoulder and say, 'I love you.'"

I had challenged this mayor and other leaders in religion, education, human services, and law enforcement to answer this question: "How could churches impact the lives of growing numbers of at-risk children?" They responded with one voice: "Churches can make a profound difference in the lives of these children if they will mobilize and train their members to form on-going one-to-one relationships with the youngest children." These words inspired the creation of the KIDS HOPE USA (KHUSA) mentoring model.

The mayor was talking about children like Jacob. When he was referred to KHUSA, he had already been arrested twenty-five times for arson and sent to a school for pyromaniacs. Jacob was only five years old. His principal told me this child, whose parents abandoned him shortly after birth, was searching for proof that someone—just *one* person—cared about him. Each life-threatening fire was a desperate plea for love.

Weeks after he was matched with Mr. Tom, Jacob's attitude and behavior changed. He didn't need to light fires anymore because he knew that Mr. Tom cared about him. Nine years later, Jacob is a "B" student and plays in the high school band.

Initiated in 1995, the KHUSA mentoring model celebrates the remarkable power of one by teaching churches to engage their own members in one-to-one relationships with high-risk children at a local elementary school. We target the youngest children because this is the age when values are formed, self-esteem is developed, and critical problem-solving skills must be acquired. It is no accident that 75% of the children who join gangs do so by age twelve.

While most of these children need help with academic skills, their greatest needs, according to their teachers, are emotional and social. Poverty, broken families, fatherlessness, drugs, abuse, and other factors over which the young child has no control seriously limit his ability and motivation to learn. "I want you to see these children as emotional checkbooks," a principal observed. "What they need is a deposit of love in their hearts."

Mentors use a weekly one-hour meeting with the child at the school to make that deposit of love. While the hour may involve a variety of relationship-building activities, including tutoring, what happens during that hour is often less important than the hour itself. Having a KHUSA mentor return to see them—*only them!*—week after week after week gradually and lovingly erodes their negative self-image, replacing it with hope. They begin to believe in themselves because this persistent friend believes in them.

"How many other kids do you see at my school?" the children ask their mentors repeatedly. One sexually abused first grader asked that question nearly fifty weeks in a row. Amanda could not believe she possessed sufficient value to make someone like Miss Kathy come back into her life. "I have been waiting all my life for you to be my friend," said another child to her mentor.

The behind-the-scenes prayer partner linked to each adult-child relationship is unique to KHUSA. Teachers tell us that the prayer partner is often the only person in the world who prays for this child. A prayer partner in Hawaii observes, "Prayer is more powerful than the direct help I could give a child. The work that needs to be done in the lives of these children can only be done in God's strength…."

We sometimes wonder who receives the greater blessing from the relationship, the mentor or the child. A child in Indiana believes he knows the answer to that question. Asked to describe KHUSA, he said, "Old people come to KIDS HOPE when they need a friend. Then KIDS HOPE goes to the elementary school to find kids like me to be their friend." Many mentors agree, noting that this is a unique opportunity to make a difference in someone's life in Jesus' name.

KHUSA has grown from three pilot programs in Michigan in 1995 to a network of 463 programs in twenty-seven states today. Representing over thirty denominations, these programs provide mentors for over seven thousand children. Significantly, over 70% of the new programs each year develop by word-of-mouth as pastors, mentors, teachers, and other school personnel tell friends and colleagues how churches can be the difference for vulnerable children.

The strongest advocates for KHUSA are the educators who see how mentors impact the lives of the children. Over 50% of all requests for KHUSA programs come from superintendents, principals, and teachers, and over four hundred schools are waiting for a connection with a Christian church. Faced each day with growing numbers of children whose needs for love cannot be met by teachers alone, they turn to the only organization in the community that has the words "We love" in its mission statement. That organization is the local church.

Dr. Lori Tubbergen Clark, superintendent of schools in Newaygo County, Michigan, a high-need rural area, was so determined to get KHUSA involved in her schools that she wrote and secured a grant to fund the program. Then she worked with community leaders who implored area churches to get involved in *every* elementary school in the district.

The same interest is expressed in urban districts like Houston, Texas, where 80% of the children are at-risk. Harvin Moore, Houston Independent School District board president and a KHUSA mentor, is working with KHUSA to develop programs in 180 schools. In his words,

> At-risk kids have the same need as any other child for a stable adult role model. It's just that they usually don't come with one. One of the greatest things we can do today to change the outcomes is to unlock the potential of adults in the community and get them into the schools as mentors. KIDS HOPE USA takes that simple idea and makes it a reality for an entire school by using the incredible human talent found in our churches. The program is fantastic and I wish we could have it in every school.

Let me say this another way: the public institution in this country charged with the education and nurture of 49.6 million children is asking the Christian church to help them love the children. The opportunity should beggar our imaginations.

Educators endorse KHUSA first and foremost because it works. According to their teachers, 99.3% of the children with KHUSA mentors show improvement in academic performance and motivation to learn. Most also show significant changes in attitude and behavior.[1] The children care to learn when they learn that someone cares about them.

But school leaders also recognize that KHUSA gives resource-strapped schools a partnership with a compassionate resource in the community. In the words of Howard Napp, former Superintendent of Byron Center, Michigan, Schools, "The relationships that have developed through the focused vision of KHUSA bring all our stakeholders—including the church—together on behalf of the children."

Students grow, but so do mentors. Four out of five mentors report that this relationship with a child has strengthened their faith; most note that this relationship has deepened their commitment to their church. Pastor

Steve Spurlock at University United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, echoes what so many mentors tell us: "My relationship with this child is one of the most important things I have ever done in my life."

KHUSA mentors are careful to respect the separation of church and state. Suzii Paynter, the director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, observes, "the KIDS HOPE USA mentoring program represents the best of Christian citizenship in the public square. Church/state legalities are honored and respected, while not compromising the legitimate transforming impact a local church can have on neighborhood at-risk children and families—love via relationships."

"We're not there to proselytize. We're there to be Christians," says Dr. Bill Shiell, pastor and KHUSA mentor at First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee.

KIDS HOPE USA has been recognized by three U.S. presidents and cited by the Points of Light Foundation as "the premier paradigm of faith-based mentoring in America." In 2006-2007, one out of every four KHUSA programs received awards from local schools, school systems, civic groups, and child welfare organizations.

The recognition that matters most, of course, is the success of the children. I love to share the story of the sixteen at-risk children at North Ward Elementary School who received a KHUSA mentor and a behind-the-scenes prayer partner from Allegan (Michigan) United Methodist Church. Against the odds, all of these children recently graduated from Allegan High School. Angie, Sarah, Ashley, Taylor, Curtis, Kimberley, Chad, Ryan, Josh, Brian, Sara, Krystal, Tony, Carla, Nate, and Amanda have hope and a future because a caring Christian mentor, working in concert with teachers and parents, helped them believe in themselves.

One makes all the difference.[2]

NOTES

1 Linda Warner, Megan Mullins, and Laurie Van Ark, "Giving Youth Hope: An Evaluation of the KIDS HOPE USA Mentoring Program—Executive Summary" (Hope, MI: The Carl Frost Center for Social Science Research, 2008), 3.

2 For more information about KIDS HOPE USA (KHUSA), see the organization's Web site, *www.kidshopeusa.org*.

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Teaching ESL to Immigrant Families in Public Schools

BY RANDY M. WOOD

Immigrant adults often seek key skills, such as speaking English as a second language, and desire a good education for their children. The Learning English Among Friends family literacy program helps public schools welcome immigrants and assist them with their educational goals.

Public schools across the country today are looking for ways to welcome and assist immigrant families as they move into their communities. In Texas, where sixty-three percent of immigrants are from Mexico,[1] the words of Juan Hernandez, author and advisor to President George W. Bush and President Vicente Fox, ring true:

> Most importantly, we must find a way to stop seeing our neighbors to the south as enemies. Mexico is not the enemy. Mexicans are loving, generous people who only need opportunity to receive as much as they contribute. So we must learn to be partners.[2]

Immigrant adults often are seeking key skills, such as speaking English as a second language, that allow them to obtain higher paying jobs and escape the cycle of poverty. They also want a good education for their children. As one recent immigrant says of the way they feel about their families:

> As Latino parents we have to help our children in every way possible. Simply because we don't speak English very well doesn't mean that we can't support our children to succeed in school. We value

> education, and there is much that we do at home every day. And staying involved in the school to watch over them is an extension of our parental responsibility.[3]

To help the local public schools welcome immigrants to the community and assist them with their educational goals, the Baylor University School of Education began a simple tutoring program in 2001 that has evolved into a family literacy program called Learning English Among Friends (LEAF).

One popular caricature of university professors has us ensconced in an ivory tower, researching important questions and exhorting these findings to students who bow at our feet! However, the Baylor University School of Education has decided that if we are going to make a difference in the education scene, we must move our programs out of that ivory tower and into the community through programs like LEAF. To prepare our students to be excellent teachers, we must model how to be active in the community. This professional change has transformed many lives—not only the lives of university professors and students, but also the lives of public school students and their families whom we serve.

LEARNING ENGLISH (AND MORE)

LEAF started with a simple request to an inner city professional development school principal—"give us fifty of your most academically challenged students who need additional support to be educationally successful." What evolved from that conversation is an innovative community-based collaboration between Baylor University and César Chávez Middle School in Waco, Texas, that is transforming the community of immigrant families through academic enrichment for students and ESL instruction for their parents.

Over the years we expanded LEAF into a multi-part program for students and their families, because research and experience show that most at-risk students in American public schools come from non-English speaking families. Furthermore, there is a definite relationship between children's early reading success and their parents' reading behaviors.

Meeting immigrant students' needs was the first phase of the program. Baylor University undergraduates began tutoring selected at-risk students in César Chávez Middle School for forty-five minutes per session, twice a week for a year. This helped the students to succeed in the state-mandated exam and their school to become the only "Texas Recognized Secondary School" in the Waco Independent School District in 2007.

In these tutoring sessions we soon discovered that many of the at-risk students came from families that did not read, write, or speak English, and did not understand the goals and methods of public school education. For instance, after about the third week of the program a mother came to the school library where we were tutoring. She ran across the room and gave me a bear hug. Tears flowed down her face as she said, "Thank you for saving my family!" She described how her daughter had been ready to

move to Mexico and live with her grandmother rather than face her friends at school, who thought she was "dumb" because she was struggling with addition, subtraction, and multiplication of fractions. But after being tutored by a Baylor math major, her daughter was working her math problems without help and even tutoring her friends who now came to her for assistance.

Interactions like this led us to develop the second phase of LEAF, which invited immigrant families to be engaged in their children's school, learn the English language, and become familiar with American education and culture. We worked with the César Chávez Middle School teachers, administrators, and Campus Decision Making Committee (CDMC) to conduct a yearlong study of literacy in the South Waco community. It was especially important for the CDMC—a group of business leaders, community leaders, parents, teachers, and friends of the school, who meet monthly to discuss ways to improve the school and increase parental involvement—to help plan and endorse the LEAF program.

The family is the most influential context for learning. By helping immigrant families to support their children in education, LEAF strengthens the entire family and helps end the cycle of poverty through education.

As we launched the expanded program, twelve Baylor student teachers and a university professor waited patiently at the door of the school wondering if any parents would come. More than twenty adults came that first day, and most of them were accompanied by children who introduced them and said they were excited that their mothers and fathers wanted to learn English.

Over the next five weeks the number of parents steadily grew. Some of us worried that the constant afternoon rain storms might hurt attendance, but we were told that rainy weather was beneficial and not a hindrance. Many of the men attending LEAF were day laborers who would not be off work if it were not raining. So, the weather "problem" was really a "blessing," enabling many more adult students to come for English instruction.

Today the LEAF program includes more than three hundred adults meeting each week in six public schools across Waco and adjacent Bellmead, Texas.[4] As a spinoff, in January, 2005, we launched the LEAF @ BU program to provide literacy training for more than forty housekeepers at Baylor University who cannot read, write, or speak English.

Two other programs have grown from the LEAF initiative. In the spring semester each year, Baylor University School of Education novices (first-year education majors) are matched with pairs of César Chávez Middle School students for tutoring twice a week. This enrichment program has helped the

school achieve the "Outstanding" marks, with nearly 88% of students passing the state assessment tests. In another initiative, the Cool Literacy Math program, fifty middle school students who have never passed the state assessment in mathematics receive math-specific tutorial help.[5]

LEARNING AMONG FRIENDS

LEAF is built on collaboration between the University, the parents' workplaces, and local public schools. The program emphasizes friendship—the "F" in its title—as the true basis for learning. These immigrant parents not only learn ESL, they become more comfortable with American public education, learn about current community events, and enjoy new relationships with neighbors they meet through small group instruction. As the parents attend weekly LEAF sessions at their local school, they see the warm and caring environment where their children study during the week. They get to know community leaders who visit periodically to inform the parents about what is happening in the neighborhood and encourage them to become more involved. They share their educational success with their families as they gain the ability to read in English to their children at home. Finally, they develop positive parenting skills related to American public education with which they can assist their children's classroom performance.[6] Originally thought of as the "crowning project" of César Chávez Middle School, LEAF is now recognized as the strong foundation for "Strengthening Families, Building Communities" in South Waco.

The family is the most influential context for learning, followed by the school and the wider community. By enriching classroom curriculum and providing after-school tutoring for new immigrant students, and teaching English and parenting skills to their parents, LEAF supports the fundamental environment in which new immigrant students live and learn, and empowers their families to take advantage of their educational opportunities. Helping these families to support their children in education strengthens the entire family and helps to end the cycle of poverty through education.

NOTES

1 U.S. Census Bureau, *2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates,* GCT0505: Percent of [Foreign-born] People Born in Mexico.

2 Juan Hernandez, *The New American Pioneers: Why Are We Afraid of Mexican Immigrants?* (Lanham, MD: Pneuma Life Publishing, 2006), 51.

3 Concha Delgado Gaitan, *Involving Latino Families in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2004), vii.

4 Currently LEAF provides programs at J. W. Carver Academy (a Waco Independent School District magnet school that is also a professional development school, or teacher-training location, for Baylor University), Lake Air Middle School, Tennyson Middle School, University Middle School, and the LaVega Junior High, Dixon Campus.

5 The expansion of LEAF and its associated programs to other schools has been made possible through the financial support of GEAR UP Waco (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), which received an $11.3 million, six-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2006. GEAR UP Waco is a partnership among

Baylor University, Texas State Technical College-Waco, Making Connections with Youth Count Inc., City of Waco Academy for Educational Development, and the Waco Independent School District that prepares at-risk students academically and socially for college.

6 Because many family members do not understand how they can help their children in school, in LEAF we discuss questions to ask children when they come home from school, such as "Do you have any homework?" and "Do you have your books?" One example of this confusion is the story of a mother who thought her son was the "Number One" student in his class because he brought home a paper for her to sign every nine weeks. Only later, as we read the paper together, did she understand it was a deficiency slip.

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When Education Comes Home

BY CHARLES AND EDNA CHRISTIAN

Is there a model for homeschooling that engages the culture and world for Christ and still maintains a relationship of mutual support with the public school system? This family in Seattle, Washington, participates in a homeschool co-op and a public school-sponsored homeschool resource center.

We made the decision to homeschool after many sleepless nights, deep discussions, and fervent prayer. It also came after two years of heavy involvement in the public school system in which our older son attended kindergarten and first grade. Edna was president of the Parent Teacher Association and Charles was a member of the principal's leadership team responsible for school policies. Among other issues, we were consistently concerned about both under funding and the underuse of resources in the classroom, as well as the way in which teaching time was used.

We continue to count many public school teachers, parents, and administrators as close friends, so our decision to homeschool was not based upon hatred for public schooling. In fact, even though both of our boys (ages ten and six) are now homeschooled, we are enrolled in a homeschool resource center governed by our school district. We also participate in a private Christian homeschool cooperative.

Prior to our decision to homeschool, we saw many models of homeschooling that did not appear to be successful or balanced. Some families tended to minimize the importance of consistently high academic standards.

Other families we encountered lacked adequate involvement with diverse groups of people and appeared to be disengaged from their communities. Our desire was to follow the balanced mandate of Christ for us and for our children: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17:15 NIV).[1]

The reason we homeschool is that we are convinced that it is the best choice for our children academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. We recognize that homeschooling is not possible or desirable for everyone, but we will share the primary reasons that homeschooling has been the right option for us.

ACADEMIC REASONS

When our older son was in public school, we were very concerned about the fact that his greatest learning opportunities came from extracurricular activities such as concerts and plays, trips to museums and other travel, music lessons and involvement in sports. Often the academic lessons in the classroom were either busy work or review for him. In our experience, the majority of classroom time involved behavior management, studying for state standardized tests, and preparing for transitions to lunch or other classes. Because of this, the actual instruction time was minimal and often focused more upon minimum grade level expectations than instilling a love of learning.

Homeschooling allows us to give our children the time and resources they need to maximize learning. They have more freedom to pursue their interests and to receive an educational experience tailored to their needs. For example, our older son plays the trumpet and is able to devote more time to practicing than he would if he were in school all day. In standardized testing last year, he exceeded grade level expectations in math and reading, so we are able to devote time and attention to his other areas of interest to help provide a balanced education for him.

An additional educational component that our children experience as a result of homeschooling is that they have more time to focus on practical living skills, self-care, and home management. We believe that this will help them on their journey to becoming independent, functional adults. By having consistent exposure to home life, they are better prepared for the business of life.

Since many of the greatest minds in our country were homeschooled (e.g., many of our presidents, artists, scientists, and so on), we know that academic success has not been the most consistent critique of homeschooling.[2] Rather, what is jokingly called the "S" word in homeschooling circles has elicited the most concern: socialization.

SOCIAL REASONS

A stereotypical view of homeschooling is that children sit in desks all day doing paperwork and never experience relationships with other chil-

dren. This is far from true for the vast majority of homeschooling families. Our children experience relationships with peers through many different activities in church, sports, music groups, classes, community activities, and clubs. They are able to develop peer friendships, yet they remain free from peer dependence.

As parents we desire to be the most influential voices in the development of our children's values. We feel that this happens more naturally and effectively through homeschooling. A surprising benefit of the choice to homeschool has been the strong relationship between our two sons, even though they are four years apart in age. If they were both in public school, they would rarely have opportunities for meaningful interaction with each other. As it is now, though, they really know and value each other and are experiencing socialization across age groups in ways that are not possible in a typical classroom.

Additionally, it is our conviction that our children should have rich, multi-cultural experiences. We recognize that this aspect of education has not traditionally been a strength of homeschooling, and examples abound of extremely separatist approaches to homeschool education. However, for families committed to celebrating diversity, homeschooling affords more opportunities for exposure to other cultures because children are not confined to the same group for six hours a day, five days a week. Indeed, recent reports have shown increased economic and racial diversity among families who choose homeschooling, which is producing greater economic, racial, and even religious diversity among those participating in homeschool cooperatives and public school-sponsored homeschool resource centers.[3]

SPIRITUAL REASONS

As Christians, we obviously want our children to love Jesus and learn his ways. While we are not advocating for schools to be places of worship or discipleship, we recognize that any place where our children spend thirty-plus hours per week will have considerable spiritual influence over them.[4] Homeschooling allows for us to more intentionally incorporate our moral and spiritual values into the education of our children. We do not mistake moral teaching for a sound, well-rounded education. Instead, we seek to provide a thorough education that is intertwined with our Christian convictions. We believe that one does not have to sacrifice a well-rounded classical education for a strong emphasis upon values and morality.[5]

THE BALANCE WE SEEK

We believe that there is a model for homeschooling that engages the culture and world for Christ and still maintains a relationship of mutual support with the public school system. For instance, our older son participates in a local elementary school band program one day per week. This allows all of us to interact with and encourage those involved in the public school system while our child benefits from a fine music program.

As mentioned above, our children also take classes at a public school-sponsored homeschool resource center that serves a wide range of students who reflect the economic, ethnic, and religious diversity of our community. In order to participate in the Seattle Homeschool Resource Center (HRC) operated by the Seattle Independent School District, our children are enrolled in the public school system as "home-based instruction students." With input from and approval by the HRC staff, we have developed a home-based course of study for them that includes taking classes in subjects such as math, science, social studies, writing, art, physical education, and chess club. These classes, which are taught by certified public school teachers through the resource center, usually are free or have only a small fee. The center provides classrooms, a library, computer facilities, a gym, and a meeting area for students and families. As part of the Seattle Independent School District, the HRC is supported by tax dollars that defray some of the costs of faculty salaries, buildings, and supplies. As parents, we receive an annual stipend of four hundred dollars to use for additional educational materials and activities in each child's approved course of study.[6]

Furthermore, our children enjoy classes offered by the Seattle Christian Homeschool Cooperative, a group of families that gather each week at one of the churches in the North Seattle area. Co-op parents draw upon their various interests and gifts to teach classes and provide other learning opportunities. Outside teachers are contracted to provide classes that parents are not qualified to teach, such as fencing, Spanish, and piano. There is an annual membership fee, supply fees for parent-taught classes, and monthly tuition for classes taught by contracted teachers. The Co-op governing board meets each month and works in conjunction with the host church regarding facility usage and maintenance.[7]

Our family desires to be engaged with our culture while being led by Christ and pointing others to him. This is a desire we share with other Christian families, regardless of their educational choices. We recognize that God has blessed us with the time, education, and logistics to be able to provide an intellectually challenging and spiritually enriching homeschool environment for both of our children. Our prayer is that homeschooling will allow our children to be everything that God has created them to be without withdrawing from the world in which God has placed them. We also pray that through homeschooling our children will gain a broad and mission-oriented view of the world that will allow them to impact others for Christ.

NOTES

1 Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

2 Several recent studies indicate high academic success rates among homeschoolers. See, for example, J. Michael Smith, "Washington Times Op-ed: Testing Proves Success of

Graduates," online at *www.hslda.org/docs/news/washingtontimes/200812010.asp*, accessed January 23, 2009.

3 Milton Gaither, "Homeschooling Goes Mainstream," *Education Next* 9:1 (Winter 2009), online at *www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/34685614.html*, accessed March 23, 2009.

4 In *Worldwide Guide to Homeschooling* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2005), Brian Ray indicates that high on the list of priorities for homeschool parents is their desire to influence the values and moral instruction of their children more directly. See also Mimi Davis, *So Why Do You Homeschool?* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005).

5 Many helpful books assist homeschool families in teaching values and morality, including Rebecca Rupp, *Home Learning Year By Year* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000), and Susan Wise Bauer, *The Well-Trained Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004).

6 See *www.seattleschools.org/schools/hrc/welcome.html* for more information about the Seattle Homeschool Resource Center.

7. See *www.seattlechristianhomeschool.org/* for more information about the Seattle Christian Homeschool Co-op.

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Teaching as a Christian Vocation

BY MINORI NAGAHARA

Regardless of the role to which their abilities and "deep gladness" lead them, teachers soon discover that their profession demands tremendous effort and commitment. Hope, grace, and hospitality are the keys to their flourishing amid the obstacles and frustrations that could breed disillusionment.

I remember once, during my first year of teaching, walking home from school after a particularly difficult week of breaking up fights, trying to reason with angry, rebellious pre-adolescents, meeting with parents and administrators, and enduring unusually rowdy class sessions with my sixth graders. Trudging along, I mentally replayed various scenes from the week and worried about what the following week might bring. As my mind wandered to a list of other jobs in which I would not have to deal with the particular difficulties and challenges that I faced as a teacher, for a fleeting moment I wondered if I should have chosen a different line of work.

I am thankful to say that the difficult aspects of being a teacher were not enough to keep me from returning to my classroom day in and day out. What kept me going at that point and at many other low points in my journey as a teacher was not a sense of grim determination to make things work, nor was it any extraordinary strength of character on my part. Rather, what allowed me to persevere was the belief that my work was meaningful and that I had been called to serve that place at that time. My work as an educator had clearly become more than just a profession to me. It was not something I did solely to pay the bills or to put food on the table. Teaching had become a very concrete way in which I could practice and express my

faith on a daily basis. As a Christian colleague and I concluded in one of our many conversations, our classrooms were places of ministry—places to which we had been called to serve.

For many Christian teachers, the act of teaching—of creating opportunities and conditions which allow students' learning and growth to take place—is not just a career choice, but is part of their vocation, their calling from God. How does anyone know that teaching is part of their Christian vocation and not just a passing interest or one career option out of many? Determining the contours of our vocation may not be an easy process, but Frederick Buechner suggests a helpful starting point when he writes, "the place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."[1] Deep self-knowledge and a sense of where we personally see the world's needs point us toward where God wants us to meet those needs and, by doing so, participate in his work here on earth.

The first step in discovering our God-given vocation involves the act of identifying and affirming the talents and abilities we have been given. This cannot be done with pride or arrogance. In order to responsibly determine what we have been called to do with our lives, it is helpful to gather information about who we are, where we have come from, what we enjoy, what our temperaments are like, and where our strengths and weaknesses lie. Particularly encouraging is the idea that God allows us to pursue the things that bring us joy and gladness. Those who find a deep sense of gladness in helping other people learn and grow into all that God has called them to be may live out their own calling in the field of education. Though this is not the only "gladness" teachers enjoy, the teaching vocation is often given to those who take delight in the process of learning and teaching.

Teachers' differing abilities and sources of delight lead them to notice and care about different aspects of our broken and hurting world. Given the vast array of educational needs today, they may live out their teaching vocation in very various ways. While some are drawn to work in inner-city public schools, others will serve in Christian education. Some may be passionate about meeting the learning needs of students who arrive in the country as refugees, while others, noticing the needs of those who live overseas, travel to teach in international schools. Teachers may develop a special concern for a specific age group of students or for those with special learning needs.

CHALLENGES TO LIVING OUT THE VOCATION OF TEACHING

Regardless of the educational role to which their abilities and "deep gladness" lead them, teachers will discover that their profession is complex and demands a tremendous amount of intellectual effort and emotional commitment. Hope becomes the key to their survival and to flourishing in the midst of obstacles and frustrations that can breed disillusionment. The challenges I faced as an inner-city teacher included working with students who came from dangerous home environments, were involved in gang

activity, or were mentally ill, just to mention a few. These challenges were in addition to the daily grind of school life with its many tasks, campus politics, and—in the current educational climate—the constant pressure to raise test scores. Despite all of these causes of frustration and reasons for despair, I found that remaining hopeful in the potential that God has given to each individual can keep teachers from writing off any student, group of students, or the task of teaching them as hopeless.

Students come into the classroom with a variety of different life experiences, levels of ability, learning styles, and needs that must be addressed for learning to take place. A teaching practice or method that was highly effective with one group of students may be completely ineffective with another. It is an ongoing challenge for teachers to find the most effective ways of reaching their particular students for the purpose of fostering growth and understanding.

In addition to the challenge of meeting the academic needs of diverse learners, teachers face the difficult realities of daily life in a particular school community. They may work with colleagues who are not easy to work with, in schools where politics trump sound teaching practices, and in districts where "teacher-proof" curriculum materials are used to ensure higher standardized test scores. Their school may be a refuge for students who come from home situations where their basic needs are not met. While there are moments enlivened by the students finally grasping a concept one has labored to teach, some days are filled with seemingly menial tasks that leave teachers feeling unnoticed and unappreciated. Teachers may become angry at an injustice that a student has suffered or feel powerless and just weep over the trials a student has to face.

In the face of injustice, disrespect, and a sense of powerlessness in remedying the problems that exist in society, in the school, and in the classroom, it is easy for teachers to become angry and discouraged. Yet, as educator Sonia Nieto reminds us, "hope can conquer many fears and it can endure even when there is little cause for optimism."[2] When teachers are filled with hope, they will persevere and find ways to continue on the journey to which they have been called.

TEACHING AS ONGOING LEARNING

Fully embracing one's vocation of teaching requires much more than completing a teacher education program, keeping up with the latest in educational practices, and remaining passionately dedicated to the education of children and young people. It requires continual intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth.

Teaching is an intellectual undertaking in which the teacher is just as much of a learner as the student. As educational theorist Paulo Freire notes,

> Education takes place when there are two learners [teacher and student] who occupy somewhat different spaces in ongoing dialogue.

> But both participants bring knowledge to the relationship, and one of the objects of the pedagogic process is to explore what each knows and what they can teach each other. A second object is to foster reflection on the self as an actor in the world in consequence of knowing.[3]

Without the desire and the disposition for continuous learning, teachers become complacent and are not as effective in their role of inviting students into the learning process.

How, one may reasonably ask, will students ever learn anything if their teacher is focused on learning? The answer is that teachers do not focus on learning to the exclusion of teaching. Rather, in an authentic learning experience, all participants have the opportunity to share insights and create knowledge through the interaction that takes place. Because students and teachers come from different backgrounds, have different educational experiences, and serve different purposes in the classroom, it is natural that what they learn from each other will differ greatly. Teachers who are avid learners—who enjoy studying the world, their students, the learning process, and their teaching practices—cultivate the attitude of studiousness in their students.

Effective teachers are all researchers whether they recognize this in themselves or not. Every day they observe what happens in their classrooms: they gather information, ask insightful questions, generate and test out new ideas, and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of their practice, which then informs how they will teach the next lesson. Because no two classrooms are exactly the same, it is not enough for teachers to read up on the latest "best practices" in education. They need to take those best practices and tailor them to their students' particular needs. A great deal of teacher learning happens as a result of classroom research—why is this student acting up in class, why is another one unable to complete her assignments, how can I teach this material in a way that engages students with these particular needs? This on-the-go research, in turn, has positive ramifications for student learning.

To fully embrace one's vocation of teaching requires more than remaining passionately dedicated to the education of children and young people. It requires continual intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth.

Learning is often most rewarding when pursued in the company of others, and this is certainly true for teachers. Positive and constructive dialogue with colleagues and with other adults can help build community among teachers and lessen the feelings of isolation that result when teachers view their practice as a strictly private effort. Teachers feel vulnerable when they

allow others to enter their classroom to see their strengths as well as their shortcomings, but as Sonia Nieto writes, "If teachers are to improve what they do and gain more satisfaction from their work, building critical and long-standing relationships with their colleagues is essential."[4]

TEACHING AND LEARNING TO LIVE IN COMMUNITY

Regardless of the school environment in which a teacher works, the act of teaching is infused with the hope of creating a more just and equitable society. To this end, teachers need to facilitate the moral development of their students in every aspect of learning. They can do this by affirming the uniqueness of each student and his or her role in the classroom, and helping to create a just community in which students can thrive.[5] Students have been created in the image of God and gifted with strengths and talents. Teachers should help students recognize and affirm their gifts and develop them through a process of lifelong learning. They should encourage students to recognize and appreciate others' gifts as well. Of course, in the classroom, as in the school and larger society, certain strengths and intelligences may be valued over others. Yet teachers set the tone in their classrooms and have the opportunity create an environment of respect for the variety of divine giftedness that we find in one another.

Students need to learn how to balance concern for their own work with a healthy desire to work alongside others in a way that is beneficial to all. Teachers can help by establishing rules for the classroom and modeling explicitly what is valued in a peaceful, cooperative learning community. They can teach students not only how to resolve the inevitable conflicts that will arise and to treat others with fairness, but also how to help their fellow students to learn. In such an environment, students will not focus only on their own learning or success, but will actively care for one another.

Each day will bring new opportunities for problem solving and conflict resolution, as teacher and students—broken human beings that they are—learn to care for one another and work cooperatively to maintain peace in the classroom. Within this laboratory community, students will get a sense of what a thriving, healthy community looks like and how to be a contributing member of it. As students leave the classroom and move to other spheres of life, this lesson empowers them to contribute to society as caring, responsible adults.

THE TEACHER AS AN AGENT OF GRACE AND HOSPITALITY

Reflective teachers understand that despite their best efforts to be flawless in their work and to treat colleagues, students, and parents with fairness and kindness, on many days they will fail to do so. Thus, one of the greatest gifts that Christian teachers can offer to their students is a classroom where grace and Christian hospitality abound. Since teachers and students are broken people striving to live in community, it is crucial for classrooms to be places of safety and affirmation where learning can take place without the fear of rejection.

I spent so much time with my students, it was inevitable that we would make mistakes and hurt one another. On many occasions I apologized to a student for my snappish remark or impatient attitude. On many mornings as I walked to school, I prayed to forgive a student for his or her offense on the previous day. Grace and forgiveness were the glue that held us together, allowing us to accept and appreciate one another more deeply than we had before.

Teachers must set the tone by having a gracious attitude toward students who offend them or who fail to carry out their responsibilities in the community. Is the classroom a place where forgiveness is offered when mistakes are made, where reconciliation and restoration are prioritized, where each person is loved and treated with fairness? Students watch the teacher carefully and often mirror how the teacher approaches relationships.

Christian hospitality is another crucial characteristic of a vibrant, inclusive community. As Christine Pohl points out, Christian hospitality does not refer to some pleasant environment in which everyone is nice. Rather, this "countercultural" virtue "involves respecting the dignity and equal worth of every person and valuing their contributions, or at least their potential contributions, to the larger society."[6] Given the ever-growing ethnic and religious diversity in classrooms across the country, Christian teachers have a wonderful opportunity to affirm their students' God-given dignity, in spite of how others may rank them, or how students may rank themselves, in societal hierarchies. This experience of hospitality from a teacher can make a lasting impact on students and play a role in helping them to become all that God would have them to be.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, effective Christian teachers who view teaching as their calling from God look like other effective teachers who do not approach teaching from this perspective. Good teachers constantly grow and learn alongside their students, meet a variety of students' needs, and help them reach their full potential as human beings who contribute to the world.

Since we are broken people striving to live and learn in community, one of the greatest gifts Christian teachers can offer to their students is a classroom where grace and Christian hospitality abound.

So what do Christian teachers bring to the table? Grounded firmly in God's work of salvation in their lives, Christian teachers approach every part of the educational process courageously, and serve tirelessly with endless hope. Henri Nouwen put it this way:

> Our true challenge is to return to the center, to the heart, and to find there the gentle voice that speaks to us and affirms us in a way that no human voice ever could. The basis of all ministry is the experience of God's unlimited and unlimiting acceptance of us as beloved children, an acceptance so full, so total, and all-embracing, that it sets us free from our compulsion to be seen, praised, and admired and frees us for Christ, who leads us on the road of service. This experience of God's acceptance frees us from our needy self and thus creates new space where we can pay selfless attention to others.[7]

The freedom that we experience in our identity as beloved children of God allows us to pursue our calling—whether that is teaching or in some other field—joyfully. As we do so, we delight in the fact God himself delights in us and in the work of our hands that we offer back to him.

NOTES

1 Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 118.

2 Sonia Nieto, *What Keeps Teachers Going?* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003), 61.

3 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 8.

4 Nieto, *What Keeps Teachers Going?* 78.

5 Julia K. Stronks and Gloria Goris Stronks, *Christian Teachers in Public Schools: A Guide for Teachers, Administrators, and Parents* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 35-36.

6 Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 61.

7 Henri Nouwen, *The Selfless Way of Christ: Downward Mobility and the Spiritual Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 58.

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Teaching about Religion in Public Schools

BY TODD C. REAM

Teachers face the challenge of teaching about religion in a manner that respects the diverse religious identities of their students. Can public school teachers legitimately reveal their own religious commitments in their classrooms, and, if so, how?

Is it possible to teach public school students about religion without indoctrinating them? Religion is a subject of considerable interest and importance to students, because their understanding of religion and their relationship to it—as much as their understanding of gender, race, or social class—is central to their identity as human beings. Furthermore, their understanding of religion is constantly being shaped in subtle yet significant ways as they interact with others in the larger society, but especially in the classrooms where they spend so much of their early years. So, if students necessarily will be learning something about religion in their classrooms, the question becomes, "Can we teach them well?"

Public schools, of course, are much different today than they were a few generations ago. Religion, which was once the established framework for public school educational efforts in the United States, was replaced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by competing frameworks such as scientific naturalism. More recently, in what some call the postmodern age, a rapidly diversifying student population has forced educators to pay more careful attention to the protections in the United States Constitution of individual rights in regard to religious belief and practice.

How, then, should public education appreciate and inform the developing religious identity of students while respecting constitutional guarantees of the free exercise of religion? Can teachers be trained to teach about reli-

gion in a manner that respects both the diversity among their students and their own identities as religious adherents? Can teachers legitimately reveal their own religious commitments in their classrooms, and, if so, how? The three books reviewed here can help us think carefully about such questions.

Kent Greenawalt's *Does God Belong in Public Schools?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, 272 pp., $19.95) offers an accessible yet detailed understanding of how interpretations of the Constitution changed over the course of the twentieth century. Through "a mixture of constitutional law and educational judgment" (p. 9), Greenawalt seeks to provide educators and other interested parties "with bases on which to make judgments of their own that go deeper than visceral like or dislike of competing positions or groups" (p. 5). He acknowledges that the identity of students has changed. Yet, when public schools fail to mention matters of religion in any way, they fail to educate students well: religious students are left wondering about the significance of their own faith, and students who are not religious are left without any real education about the religious beliefs and practices around them.

Greenawalt believes that Supreme Court decisions dating back to 1962 and 1963 indicate "schools could teach *about* religion but not attempt to indoctrinate" (p. 8). In order to define the line between instruction about religion and indoctrination, Greenawalt reviews the bearing that relevant Supreme Court decisions have on various practices in public education, including moments of silence, usage of facilities, and teaching about religion in various disciplines. Perhaps the most significant case that he identifies is *Abington Township v. Schempp*, in which the Supreme Court ruled that a student's education is not complete unless it includes various lessons about religion. According to the *Schempp* decision, such lessons are to be "presented objectively as part of a secular program of education" (p. 19). Greenawalt contends that public schools are more likely to evade their responsibility to provide their students with complete educations than they are to offer religious indoctrination.

However, what happens when we no longer think of teachers as being objective or neutral in regard to religious commitment? Robert Kunzman addresses this question in *Grappling with the Good: Talking about Religion and Morality in Public Schools* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006, 168 pp., $23.95). Building on the constitutional understanding identified by Greenawalt and others concerning the need to teach religion in public schools, Kunzman argues that "we can and should help students learn

how to talk about religion and morality, learn how to discuss disagreements that are influenced by religious and other ethical perspectives—not because we can 'solve' them, but because this grappling is the responsibility of informed, respectful citizenship" (p. 2).

Kunzman commends a pedagogical approach, "Ethical Dialogue," that embodies this form of grappling. Grounded in a Kantian understanding of mutual respect, Ethical Dialogue involves imaginative engagement and civic deliberation. These two practices, which Kunzman follows in the high school classrooms he leads, are far from being abstract: imaginative engagement includes "role-plays, field experiences, and art and stories" (p. 68), and civic deliberation involves vibrant discussion and debate. He concludes by describing in some detail how these twin practices informed a conversation among his students concerning religion's rightful role in the development of laws and public policies dealing with euthanasia and the death penalty.

While Ethical Dialogue marks a significant improvement on the pedagogical efforts of a previous era when both teachers and students acted as if education had little to do with their religious identities, Kunzman's approach continues to restrict teachers to objectively arbitrating the variety of religious identities of their students. Thus, he goes to great lengths to extol the merits of teacher neutrality. I wonder if, in time, this too will prove to be insufficient. Surely teachers will yearn to enjoy the same advantages they afford to their students: they will yearn to stop relegating their religious identity to the privacy of their devotional lives and the seclusion of their houses of worship.

If Kunzman's Ethical Dialogue offers a pedagogical approach to the teaching of religion, Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes offer a justification for the place of religion in the curriculum of public schools. In *Taking Religion Seriously across the Curriculum* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998, 221 pp., $5.95), Nord and Haynes contend that in recent years a new consensus has emerged concerning the place of religion in the public school curriculum. Because religion is a powerful force in both history and the contemporary world, if students are going to be prepared to live in this world then "religion is relevant to virtually all subjects of the curriculum" (p. 37). Nord and Haynes also acknowledge that part of this relevance is driven by the fact that the world is increasingly defined by a sense of religious diversity. As a result, "it is important for students to understand a variety of religions, not just their own" (p. 37).

Nord and Haynes explore how the current shortage of religious dialogue in the classroom can be addressed within a host of disciplines ranging from history, economics, and the sciences to world religions. However, their volume is framed by a possible contradiction. On one hand, they claim that

this new consensus is defined by the understanding that "we are born into cultures defined by languages and institutions, ideas and ideals, and we know who we are only when we have some sense of our inheritance" (p. 39). Public schools are thus charged with the responsibility of preserving and protecting this inheritance. Instead of denying that this dimension exists in the lives of the students they serve, public schools can accelerate this awareness for the sake of the fabric of liberal democracy. On the other hand, Nord and Haynes claim that adequately trained teachers are ones prepared to "teach about a variety of religions with fairness and objectivity" (p. 31). To their credit, Nord and Haynes do not see "fairness and objectivity" as one in the same as neutrality; rather they believe that "while neutrality requires fairness, fairness does not require neutrality" (p. 44). However, one wonders if this distinction is clear and precise enough to prevent the religious identity of teachers from being relegated to the private spheres of their lives.

Greenawalt and Kunzman lobby for objectivity. Nord and Haynes's understanding of fairness comes closer to allowing a place for the religious identity of teachers in the classroom, but it is unclear that their position allows teachers more freedom than the objectivity view does. Drawing from the language of the *Schempp* case, all four scholars offer promises and warn of perils for teaching religion in the public school classroom. The promises come from recognizing that *Schempp* allows for instruction about religion. The perils come in terms of the objective instruction teachers are called to offer.

The language of *Schempp* reflects the spirit of the modern age, one defined by the power of objectivity. However, in postmodernity our confidence in that power is waning. Postmodernity calls us to see that human identity is more complex. As a result, teachers, like their students, cannot check their religious identity at the door to their classrooms. Even if such an option were possible, it would contradict the very education that Greenawalt and Kunzman (and perhaps Nord and Haynes) urge us to offer students. Teachers cannot help students appreciate their own religious identity and the religious identity of the larger world in which they live if the religious identity of the teachers needs to be relegated to their private lives.

What if teachers were encouraged to maintain their own religious identity as a means of modeling a charitable spirit toward others' religious identities, and of cultivating such a spirit in their students? Persons with a charitable spirit consistently seek to understand how and why others believe and act the ways they do. They try to understand such beliefs and actions on the terms of others—not on terms externally imposed upon them.

Charity, in this sense, might be cultivated among teachers through professional development programs based on case studies and readings from

the new Faith and Globalization Initiative led by Miroslav Volf. This initiative, housed within Yale Divinity School and Yale School of Management, addresses pressing topics such as "faith and the dynamics of economic development," "faith and violence," "persons of faith who are publicly engaged," "faith and human rights," "the public role of faith in a liberal democracy," and "secularization, religious resurgence, and multiple modernities." It is driven by the belief that "Intentional and sustained reflection on the crucial issues of faith and globalization can lead to the kind of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence that life in the 21st century demands."† Such reflection begins with a deep appreciation of one's own religious particularity, which then fosters a charitable appreciation for the faiths of others. For instance, reflection within in the larger Abrahamic tradition—which includes Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—can propel adherents to reach out to others in peace and love.

Relegating religious identity to the private sphere fails both teachers and students. Developing a charitable spirit toward others' religious identities is necessary not only for a deep understanding of religion in the world today, but also for achieving the goals of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

NOTE

† "Introduction to Yale's Faith and Globalization Initiative," online at *http://faithandglobalization.yale.edu*, accessed March 18, 2009.

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Spiritual Nourishment for Teachers

BY SHEILA ROGERS GLOER

Whatever our teaching roles—classroom teacher, parent, aide, librarian, or volunteer—we can find inspiration in the four books reviewed here. They lead us to think in honest ways about and pray in a heartfelt manner for our students and ourselves.

Being a teacher is an isolating and lonely profession. That may sound strange to us because teachers are surrounded by other people during the entire workday. Yet consider that teachers make most decisions entirely alone. They reflect on how to improve their teaching on their own. When looking for new ideas they turn to textbooks and resources that they search by themselves. They enter the classroom early in the morning full of hope for a new day with lessons carefully planned, materials ready, and procedures posted. When the students arrive, the door is shut and the teachers are alone with their charges. The students all have individual needs, individual learning styles, and individual goals to achieve. This is a daunting responsibility, and most teachers face it by themselves. However, for Christian teachers who see teaching as a divine calling, God is always near to give guidance, patience, and the partnership with God and one another that teachers need to make it through the day with joy and peace. To Christian teachers seeking resources to help strengthen this relationship with God, the most experienced teacher of all, I would like to suggest four books for spiritual nourishment written with teachers in mind.

When I ask teachers around the country about the factors for successful teaching, most respond that the student-teacher relationship is one of the most important determinants of success in the classroom. In *A Teacher's Prayerbook: To Know and Love Your Students* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third

Publications, 1997, 56 pp., $7.95), Ginger Farry reminds us to bring God into the relationship, for "in order to communicate with students on a heart level, God must be invited into the dialogue" (p. 1). She explores a range of classroom experiences—filled with joy, gratitude, sorrow, anger, doubt, or self-discovery—to which teachers will relate, finding that "it seems necessary to 'pray the day anew' reflecting on what is at the core of each experience" (p. 1). Her invitation to prayer is expressed through her own heartfelt prayers, which are written poetically like biblical psalms, followed by a brief reflection and a few questions of examen that focus on a particular challenge readers might face.

Farry offers no pious platitudes as she reflects honestly in "I Don't Love Them Today," but uses her sense of humor to accentuate the knowledge that God loves students even when they seem undesirable:

> But I know that you care, Lord,
> they're part of your plan,
> so I give you them NOW,
> just do what you can. (p. 46)

In "Surprised by Faith," she reminds teachers that God's nourishment can come from the students themselves. Speaking of one young person who is bright, quiet, and manly, she writes:

> But just today,
> while we all prayed,
> my eyes flashed on his face.
> And when he threw a kiss to you,
> dear Lord, I felt your grace. (p. 9)

A few of Farry's prayers give evidence of the parochial setting where she teaches—Msgr. McClancy Memorial High School, a Catholic school for young men in Queens, New York. Yet anyone who has the heart's desire to take student relationships to God in prayer will recognize in this simple, insightful book of poetic prayer the universal truth concerning the presence of God in teachers' relationships with students.

In the acknowledgements to *Prayers for Homeschool Moms* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003, 176 pp., $14.95), Michele Howe writes, "my prayer is that this compilation of stories and prayers will reach every homeschooling mom exactly at her point of need, embracing her with hopeful encouragement and a sense of community" (p. xiv). In sections entitled "The Practice of Homeschooling," "Teaching Day by Day," "Character Development," "Challenges and Choices," and "The Perks," Howe presents fifty-two meditations. Each one begins with a story of an experience of a homeschool mom,

offers a relevant Scripture passage and a prayer (written in the voice of the mom), and concludes with an inspirational quote from a speaker or author. Although a few of the stories seem unrealistically upbeat, one can still draw hope from their conclusion.

Many of Howe's scenarios about moms, families, and neighborhoods are not unique to homeschooling, but are tales of parenting and living in community to which anyone might relate. For example, in the story "Time for Tea" Maggie and her daughter Elise recognize that isolating ourselves in the neighborhood is not the way God calls us to live in community. Having heard angry voices coming from a nearby house and realizing she did not even know the neighborhood family's name made Maggie stop to think about 1 Peter 4:9-10: "Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another; as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Maggie's prayer for forgiveness and help in changing her life to be a "sacrificial offering poured out for others" challenges not only the homeschool mom, but every person who seeks to live in community, demonstrating the love of God to neighbor and family (pp. 68-69).

In another story, "Trading Places," Melissa is struggling to find a published curriculum to help her teach Spanish to her children. When she discovers that Emily, a former Spanish teacher, has moved into her neighborhood, Melissa learns a lesson about self-reliance, submission to God's guidance, and God's provision of a community for her (pp. 18-20).

Howe's scenarios provide readers a few minutes of daily spiritual nourishment as they share her characters' lives, reflect on Scripture, and pray with them.

In the style of a daily devotional book for teachers, Vicki Caruana's *Before the Bell Rings: 180 Inspirations to Start a Teacher's Day* (New York: Howard Books, 2006, 308 pp., $14.99) provides Scripture passages and short readings arranged to coincide with the flow of an academic year. Each entry concludes with an important thought to carry through the day and a prayer to minister to the teacher's daily struggles. The book's hardback binding and attached ribbon to mark the place help readers return easily to the next entry, which affords new hope and strength to begin a new teaching day.

Each devotional is like a daily chat with a friend who has walked the same road, offering insightful ways to bring rest and refreshment, while acknowledging the isolation and weariness that creep into a teacher's life. Indeed, Caruana is an educator who has taught at both the high school and university levels, and authored more than twenty books, including the best-selling *Apples & Chalkdust: Inspirational Stories & Encouragement for Teachers* (1998) and related products.

Caruana draws on her wide experience of the daily diversity that characterizes the public school arena—from the joys of "picture day" to keeping peace in the classroom, from teacher gossip to isolation and lack of community for the newest of teachers. She inspires not so much a sense of pride in one's school, but of service to humanity, challenging her readers to "teach with the assurance that what you do does indeed make a difference" (p. 105).

Caruana is sensitive to how teachers may struggle to integrate their school experiences with their Christian faith. In "Odd Man Out," for example, she writes humorously about how others may not understand the unusual joy one experiences in responding to a divine call to be an educator, including the joy a "called" teacher may feel in the "rhythm of the school day and even the smell of mystery meatloaf wafting from the cafeteria" (p. 60). Her final thought about how Christian teachers might not always feel like they fit in is a good example of the folksy encouragement in this book: "Today you may feel like you're clumsily following a difficult set of dance steps, but remember you're really following God's exquisite lead. Lord, even if they gawk at me on the dance floor, they'll certainly admire my Partner" (p. 61).

In *Morning Meetings with Jesus: 180 Devotions for Teachers* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2008, 270 pp., $16.00), Susan O'Carroll Drake shares openly from her experiences of teaching in a challenging urban setting, transparently describing her days of fear, feelings of inadequacy, and questioning of her mission, even while she looks daily to Jesus as the master teacher. She concludes each devotional reading with a prayer, a challenge or focus thought, and a Scripture passage to study.

Each devotional is like a daily chat with a friend who has walked the same road, offering insightful ways to bring rest and refreshment, while acknowledging the isolation and weariness that creep into a teacher's life.

For example, in "On the Move" she tells of being literally "on the move" during her first year of teaching, with no classroom of her own, but only a cart to carry her needed materials from room to room. She took comfort in the fact that Jesus was also a teacher on the move, who allowed his situation to bring him to those who needed him most. She does not say that she was "like Jesus," but that "Jesus knows what it's like to feel unsettled. He knows it is not where you are that counts, but who you are. God can use your frustrating situations

for good, allowing them to mold you toward perfection and mastery." Her prayer to God—"please help me push my cart today"—could be the prayer of all teachers (p. 39).

In another entry she describes a creative, yet potentially controversial, learning experience created for her high school anatomy class—a Friday evening field trip to the local morgue. "I know that my students are excited to culminate their anatomy/physiology unit with this hands-on experience," she writes, yet she is filled with doubt for the success of the learning and the behavior of her students (p. 143). Her subsequent reflection on this trip brings hope to all who have ever doubted their own performance in the classroom: "We may doubt our effectiveness, our abilities, our calling, and even our God. Despite our doubts, God's power and ability will always be with us. Strategically placed, uniquely prepared, and always accompanied by the great I AM, you have been sent to do great things" (p. 144).

"My experience in a somewhat challenging urban setting may not match your experience, but you may find this guide useful whether you work in a public, private, parochial, or home-school venue," O'Carroll Drake writes. "Regardless of your mission, if you are a Christian teacher, you already know you need guidance, inspiration, strength, wisdom, and Jesus—a model worth emulating" (p. xv). This book speaks truth to Christian teachers who might feel alone in their calling, and brings a sense of hope, community, and spiritual nourishment for the teacher's soul whatever her setting.

No matter what your teaching role—be it classroom teacher, parent teacher, teacher's aide, librarian, or volunteer—you can find inspiration and nourishment in the pages of these books. As a homeschool parent, a teacher with impoverished students, a teacher in the suburbs or rural areas, or a teacher in a private school setting, you will find that one of these books is right for you. Whether you feel isolated or you have a supportive community, whether you have great mentors or you must make solitary decisions, these books can encourage and inspire you as you seek to fulfill your God-given call to teach. They will lead you to think in honest ways about and pray in a heartfelt manner for your students and yourself.

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