



# Applied Theology In Conversation with A Vision for Learning

Lilly Faculty Fellow's Paper

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## Forward

We met through my sister, and then found much in common, idea threads of crossing cultures, of integration of Christian faith and higher education, and of experiential learning. Amazing how a friendship can develop in a one exploring conversation.

Out of the intro conversation came an invitation to review a paper Rod was writing for presentation to you, his colleagues at Northwestern College, this paper in fact. I appreciated Rod's mix of poetry, personal reflection, humor, lyrics, and academic prose. It was an honor to contribute a few suggestions, including a model of the visioning process two friends and I wrote for a class at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA.

In 1992 my husband and I had the privilege of contributing to the early years of LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania, the first Christian liberal arts university in the former Soviet Union. After a study break, we returned in 2001 to Chair the Business Administration Department there. This experience leads me to strongly concur with the need for the kind of theological dialogue Rod proposes. Creating conversation on the distinctively Christian aspects of NWC's premise and promise is extremely relevant.

I see this paper as Rod's heartfelt call for whole-hearted participation in NWC's compelling Vision for Learning that encourages the community to: (a) trust, love, and worship God; (b) engage ideas; (c) connect knowledge and experience; and (d) respond to God's call. I find it an honor indeed to contribute to the academic, spiritual, and interpersonal development of college students, to see them at graduation or in a return visit to campus and to reflect on the freshmen who became these young, Christian leaders. May God be glorified in our contribution to this vision for NWC!

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## Proposal: Applied Theology in Conversation with A Vision for Learning

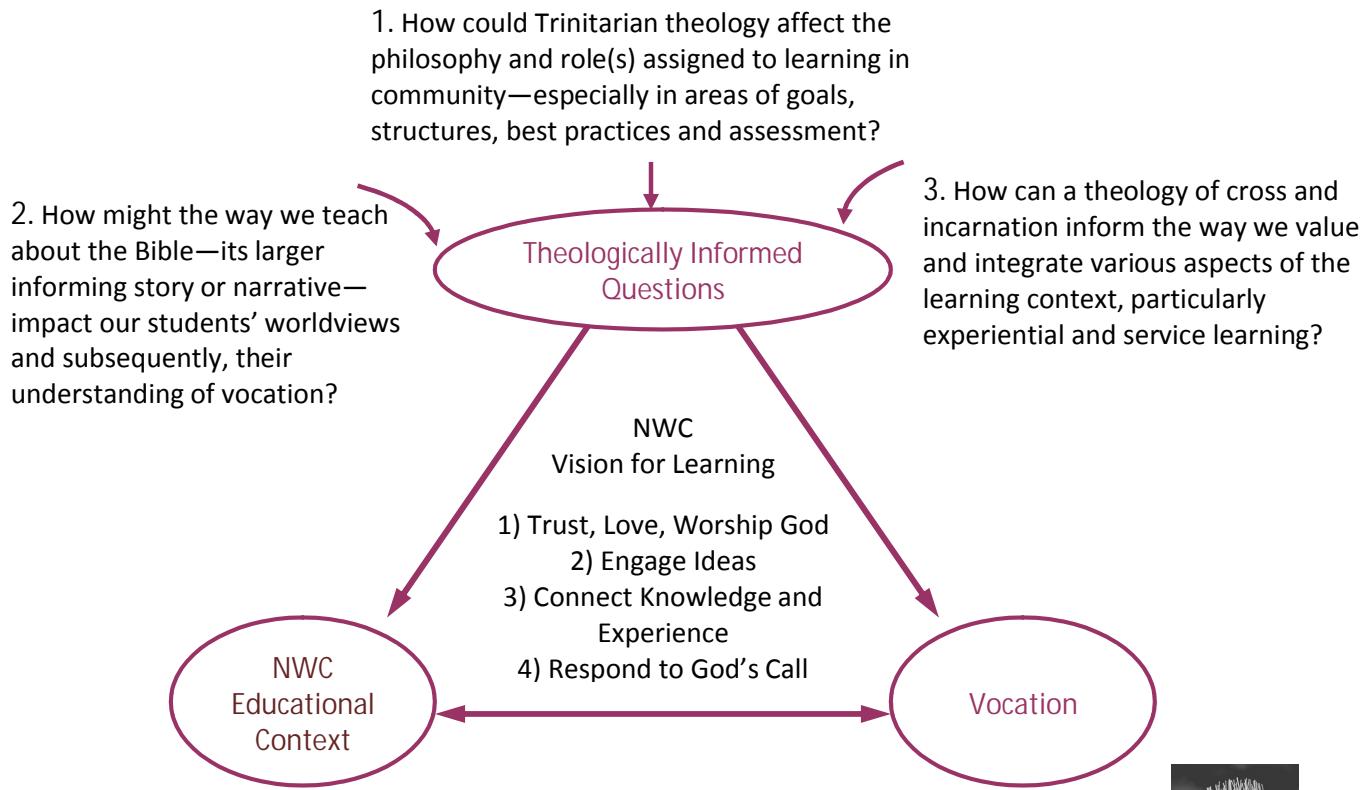
This is a Lilly Faculty Fellows proposal for a writing project. The paper employs Three Theologically Informed Questions, listed as 1, 2 & 3 in the schematic below. The Questions are meant to stimulate exploration about the formation of students and vocare in the NWC Educational Context. The corners of the triangle visually represent the major concerns of conversation. The writing and reflection will focus specifically in and through our unique liberal arts perspective, by critically engaging each Theologically Informed Question with the applicable points of NWC's Vision for Learning. NWC desires to prepare students, who will:

- Trust, Love, and Worship God
- Engage Ideas
- Connect Knowledge and Experience
- Respond to God's Call

However, since one aspect of this research is to have an expanding conversation (through forums and discussion groups) with others in the NWC community, new ideas and questions are expected to emerge. Nevertheless, certain areas are envisioned as extremely helpful to bring focus to the proposal, such as:

- How an applied Trinitarian theology can inform the role of community in education
- How one's approach to Scripture impacts worldview and vocational understanding
- How reflection on Christ's incarnation relates to the integration of various learning practices

As each Theologically Informed Question (1, 2 & 3 below) takes its turn at the top of the schematic, it engages the four areas of the NWC Vision for Learning (within the triangle), stimulating an applied theological conversation.



## Preface

"If you want to travel fast, go alone; if you want to travel far, go together" (Fulbe Proverb)

### Background

"I have a dream . . ." and "the world may little note nor long remember what we say here . . ." With no disrespect for either Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. or President Lincoln I begin this writing with a bipolar and relational tension that is constantly working within me! I believe in the dream called Northwestern College (NWC) and am committed whole-heartedly to A Vision for Learning and its core values.<sup>1</sup> I love the hospitality for dialogue and growth together presented by the moment in time we all find ourselves in now at NWC. While it can be uncomfortable, it is into such a unique, diverse and stimulating learning community that I offer whatever loaves and fishes I have. So I'm standing somewhere between such shared dreams of possibilities and fears; hoping that I keep leaning asymmetrically toward the dream side of the two poles!

I wonder where you are and whether you feel similar hopes and fears. What do you do with this being – in-between—in this wonderful and terrible tension of desiring and praying to see the Kingdom come more fully among us and still being fearful the beast of urgent needs will swallow the fragile creature of creative reflection; if you sense this, I believe we should journey on together. Yet I believe in the pain of envisioning. And it is my deep hope that out of the community dialogue space we create together, that God's Spirit will bring, perhaps mysteriously and miraculously, a synergy and multiplication of our various offerings in this place and time.

So I dare to envision, together, not "a pie in the sky by and by" but rather, "a piece, on our educational plate, at this date!" I invite all who desire this to enter together, into a "groan zone" of open sharing—like a visit around a large kitchen table if you will, in the house of learning at NWC. I know I am one who needs dialogue and life with others in community to reason well in the faith; not only do I want to journey with you as readers and dialogue partners, I must! I believe we want to go far and discover much we cannot see alone. I hope that we are patient enough to find joy in our journey as a relational community.

My Ph.D. work entitled "Fulbe Identity in Community", coming out of lived experiences of the Spidahl family of five among the Fulbe (mostly Muslims) of northern Cameroon brought new insights into the importance of perceived identity and relationality to learning. This was especially true in regard to transformation and growth of individuals learning to explore the boundaries of what it meant to be "a new creation in Christ;" what George Hunsberger (as cited in Hastings, 2007) describes as an encounter with "one who bursts open the culture's models with the power of a wholly new fact" (p. 31).

The vision and origin of the Mission House at NWC came out of intercultural experiences where I observed that the Achilles' heel of westerners like me, living overseas, was an inability to comprehend, know and live well in real community. This inability inhibited a comprehension of what was really going on in the culture—it was like a pair of glasses that filtered out what should be seen and refracted facts toward an individualistic and utilitarian bent. This affected all sorts, anthropologists and sociologists as

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<sup>1</sup> These can be found on the NWC website at <http://www.nwciowa.edu/vision/>. You are strongly encouraged to read this document before going further and keep it in mind throughout



well as businessmen, NGO staff, Peace Corps workers and missionaries brought ways of being and seeing that actually prevented knowing others in a community-based culture.

Alice (my wife) and I felt that we could make a contribution to students with intercultural and missional leanings by joining together with students and intentionally exploring a Christ-informed, Biblically literate community-on-the-way. Its only requirement is commitment to one another in Christ and an expressed willingness to participate in what the community deems important. After having lived through three years of joys and trials with some 40 participants, we are now entering our fourth year, expecting 21 students in August.

### A Pastoral Prayer Over Our Educational Reflection

I acknowledge, Lord, and I give thanks that you have created your image in me, so that I may remember you, think of you, love you. But this image is so effaced and worn away by vice, so darkened by the smoke of sin that it cannot do what it was made to do unless you renew it and reform it. I do not try, Lord, to attain your lofty heights, because my understanding is in no way equal to it. But I do desire to understand your truth a little, that truth that my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that "unless I believe, I shall not understand" (Isa.7:9) (Anselm of Canterbury)

I am deeply grateful for the kindnesses of Ryan Carlson, Katie Gard, Lindsay Squires and Bonnie Straight as friends and collaborators that read, critiqued and offered helpful suggestions on this work. I also heartily thank Dave Nonnemacher and his committee for providing the funding and space for this project and, knowing his love Romania, open spaces and difficult tasks, I dedicate the following piece of personal reflection to those who indwell the oft-named, sometimes-nurtured and frequently-misunderstood, yet Lilly-Endowed vision of integrated learning called vocare.



## Prologue: The Call of Cirsium Arvense

A Poetic Reflection on Learning: Task vs. Experience

I thought I went out to fulfill task  
with you – a third, non-personal “it.”  
The community called “city of . . .”,  
the institutional entity demanded that  
“those concerned encounter and correct  
what was out-of-ordinance on their property . . .”  
Weeds! Thistles! And Cirsium arvense,  
lovely as the purple flower that  
belies the surrounding prickles and stings,  
but noncompliant to the institutional ethos  
of kept lawn and Round-Up Ready life.

I knew mostly what I’d heard of you,  
an oft-cursed, prickly and handle-with-gloves invasive weed,  
a millions-of-seed-producing scourge to grain farmers,  
and the joyful feast of gold and purple finch!  
I was so called, predestined perhaps,  
to willfully meet you on your turf,  
so I begrudgingly pulled on knee-boots,  
brought whetstone to scythe, and  
set off into the holiness of early morning.

Out there to meet you,  
to know you beyond summons or task,  
it was thistle to beard, inside to out.  
From reclining comfort of deck to  
hacking through new greens of meaning:  
burning and itching deep greens,  
prickling, scratching light greens,  
yellow greens, lime greens, olive greens,  
rashing, sneezing, tangling, tripping –  
so many shades of green!  
And growing somewhere in all this greening,  
I was surprised with a new joy of knowing  
unknown before your call.

I forgot you among the columbine,  
yellow pistils, stamens dew-wet and dripping  
with morning promise and awe.  
Pink-flushed and shaded purple,  
how could you remain mere task?



You beckon me on with the daisies,  
and I wander from show  
to show, wondering  
upside down and over  
each dew-steeped floweret.

I drift back between thistle and flower  
to the planting times of this one-something  
acre prairie. Seven years pass in one  
step, my 27 year-old mind  
constantly surprised to be in a body over fifty.  
Big blue stem, Indian grass,  
flax flowers, and thistles I once dug in  
earth softened by spring showers –  
now where did I lay down that scythe?

The slough grass is 3 feet tall  
and dripping but I plough through.  
Dew-legged I meet you, oh Canada Thistle!  
European-born you've arrived,  
as have I, perhaps on the same boat.  
I, too, came as a weed to Chippewa  
and Dakota Sioux, Cheyenne, Ojibwa,  
Fox and early Arapahoe – all  
Minnesotans when Minnesota meant  
Land-Of-Sky-Blue-In-Waters.  
Did my kind march to cut them down  
even as I lay my scythe to you?

Swing, whuur-op and slice!  
Swing, whuur-op and lop!  
You are resilient – a Type A, Alpha weed,  
pushing my scythe to its limit, strength to strength.  
I feel my steel winning, but for a day.  
Neither this body nor its descendants  
will ever overcome all your number,  
even in this four-acre eon.

Still I plunge ahead, hands cramping,  
drawn into hollow, rocky slope,  
and mustard flowered depth.  
Wring-hook slides and slips  
as the fifty year-old handle shrinks in the heat,  
throwing off my rhythm. I should have  
soaked the handle in the slough  
overnight, but I readjust to slay scores more.  
The old scythe is so well-crafted and



like you, will remain for grandchild to behold,  
to marvel upon long after I'm gone.

Swinging this steel against you, Cirsium,  
I wonder at my scythe's maker, his envisioning  
the motion of hand and wrist as extension of  
arm, muscle, sinew, bone, body, heart, mind, and will.  
How often did he<sup>2</sup> test and adjust his emerging creation?  
Laying row after row of golden wheat or oats,  
smiling at the feast for family, flock and horses –  
but today I am hunting you, slicing-after-you  
with this piece of history, drawn in over my head  
through vegetative enclaves of nine foot thistles  
towering over sow-thistle like trees.  
Deep in now and I am enveloped in thistle-shade,  
cool and quiet for a moment – but I'm moving again,  
smiling, swinging, knowing you anew in the company of others,  
chuckling at such mixed community, wincing  
at the prick where bared knee knows the  
bite of your steely white barbs!

On hillside above this two-acre pond,  
bemused at this forced engagement,  
this wedding of steel with knowing you,  
I remove Tilley hat of cotton sail cloth.  
Coolness breaks across sweat-stung eyes,  
and I watch as breeze sends aspen leaves a-quaking,  
their flattened petioles catching wind like no other leaf.

I step back, leaning against trunk and into eleven years of growth,  
before house and restored prairie. I remember  
the tree planter looking at me quizzically when I asked,  
"How much do you want to take an aspen  
from that edge of my father-in-law's wood  
and plant it on the pond's far side?"  
He smiled, and standing shoulder to shoulder, could envision with me.  
"Same price," he said in a voice that spoke heart to heart.

Now I am standing in that vision,  
imagining even more as a golden fall forest of hundreds  
here, across the pond, where Cirsium has called me.  
Will others come to look from this side of knowing?  
I pray they will walk over, from task to call,

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<sup>2</sup> Using masculine pronouns to refer to God, as the original documents of Scripture often do, does not connote a position on God being exclusively masculine. This is then a question of cultural context, vernacular and interpretation rather than one of ontology. The whole story of Scripture reveals God's inclusive love for all.



and gaze from this side, too!

Finding more thistle than my arms wish,  
I pause, then desist. I knew you  
as thistle, as category, as object –  
but to know you in variegated community?  
I could not without being drawn into  
what seemed a morning duty; if only I then  
knew the calling that would come through you!

Oh Cirsium! I see more of you tucked between  
tree and pond in places the weed inspector  
cannot see – and there, where you have already  
bloomed, finches snatch hungrily at your seed!  
But I leave you to purple and gold finch; energize their  
southward flight, because weary,  
I rest my scythe.

Too often I wish-dream for callings without thistles,  
but this day I bless God for the Creation given-gift –  
coming back through body to soul, heart, and mind.  
Though I cannot speak what has been lost or found,  
this realization inhabits me anew  
with appreciation and repentance.  
The task becomes  
a means of knowing my ignorance  
before meeting you,  
O blessed Cirsium arvense!

### Unpacking the Poetry

Education may often appear as task. A learner who sees merely the obligation seeks only to finish the job and move on. When learning is seen less as task and more as learning experience and “every common bush afire with God” (Elizabeth Browning), we can emerge with a deeper and broader understanding, and a higher perspective that becomes a pervading integrator for all of academics and all of life.

All genuine education comes about through experience. (John Dewey)



## Part I: Introduction to the Context

### Creating Space to Actualize Northwestern College's Vision for Learning

#### Teach Your Children Lyrics by Graham Nash

You, who are on the road,  
Must have a code  
that you can live by.  
And so, become yourself  
because the past  
is just a goodbye.

Teach, your children well  
their father's hell  
did slowly go by  
and feed them on your dreams  
the one they pick's  
the one you'll know by.  
Don't you ever ask them why  
If they told you, you would die  
So just look at them and sigh  
And know they love you.

And you (Can you hear and)  
Of tender years (Do you care and)  
Can't know the fears (Can you see we)  
That your elders grew by (Must be free to)  
And so please help (Teach your children)  
Them with your youth (You believe and)  
They seek the truth (Make a world that)  
Before they can die (We can live in)  
So teach your parents well . . .<sup>3</sup> (Nash, 1970)

I remember resonating profoundly with the themes of this song in college years, especially the journey to discover “oneself.” I still resonate profoundly with its themes . . . although I now am looking back, wanting the world I live in to be left a better place, knowing the pain of mistakes, and wanting students to know that in spite of many misplaced attempts, our labor is one of love.

I would not agree however that, the past is “just a goodbye;” it is a foreign country—and we cannot as a present community of learning “just go and live there.” Yet the values of NWC past contribute greatly to who we are as we envision the future . . . and yet these values must somehow be embodied in structures that respond to new questions, ones that somehow reach forward and take us beyond fulfilling today’s commitments and pressing needs.

<sup>3</sup> You can listen to a recording of the song on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6pphVs8bF0>



And, our learning community does have a “code” that we can (and I suggest, we must) “live by” if we hope to become our educational selves by rightly holding faith and learning in proper relationship.

## Envisioning to Action in Community

Our “code to live by” is our Vision for Learning. Our attention to the truth it reflects will determine the future and fullness of the educational self of NWC, our “being.” Our doing will flow from our identity, what we believe about our educational self.

The timing is right for a campus-wide dialogue to unfold, to flesh out commonly agreed upon structures and shared assessment instruments that facilitate a proper relationship between faith and learning. The educational goals set forth in A Vision for Learning must be at the center of this dialogue because it is already our common document defining our vision. Agreement on core values is essential to sound planning that will bring about results and helps achieve goals. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni should be welcomed and encouraged to participate in the dialogue for it concerns our heritage and our future as a learning community.

A mission/vision statement<sup>4</sup> not only tells us what we should be; when applied it tells us also what we are not. Some realities promised may not yet have found enough structural space to exist. Where this is the case Jürgen Moltmann's<sup>5</sup> words are apropos:

Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it to contradict it . . . for the goal of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present (Moltmann, 1993).

I am convinced that a major part of this journey of discovery together is simply the ongoing work of bringing faith and learning to a fuller reality in conversation together. Paying more and ongoing attention to our four-fold commitment to forming students who “trust, love, and worship God . . . engage ideas . . . connect knowledge and experience . . . respond to God’s call” (A Vision for Learning, 2009).

If there are other larger concerns or ideologies that guide us, apart from the four major values of our mission/vision, it would seem they must be named at this point and placed before the community; otherwise it is urgent to get on with working out our common covenant, through a truthting process.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Eph. 4:15-16 (New International Version)).

## Willingness to Enter and Live in the “Groan Zone”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> I have used “mission/vision statement” throughout the paper because of various ways mission and vision statements are presently being used at NWC. We all may not be agreed on what constitutes a mission statement and what constitutes a vision statement and I am unaware if we have or have not defined these parameters.

<sup>5</sup> A twentieth century German theologian.



The visioning process . . . begins by developing an initial vision or a mental model of how the environment works (sensemaking) and then [the developer] communicates that image to others to gain their support (sensegiving). . . Their process moves from intuitive models, imprecise, open-ended, felt belief systems, to metaphors, incomplete statements of one thing in terms of another, to formal models, more refined and distinctly articulated models, to action, actual implementation of the vision (Sapp, Straight & Walz, 1999, p. 61).

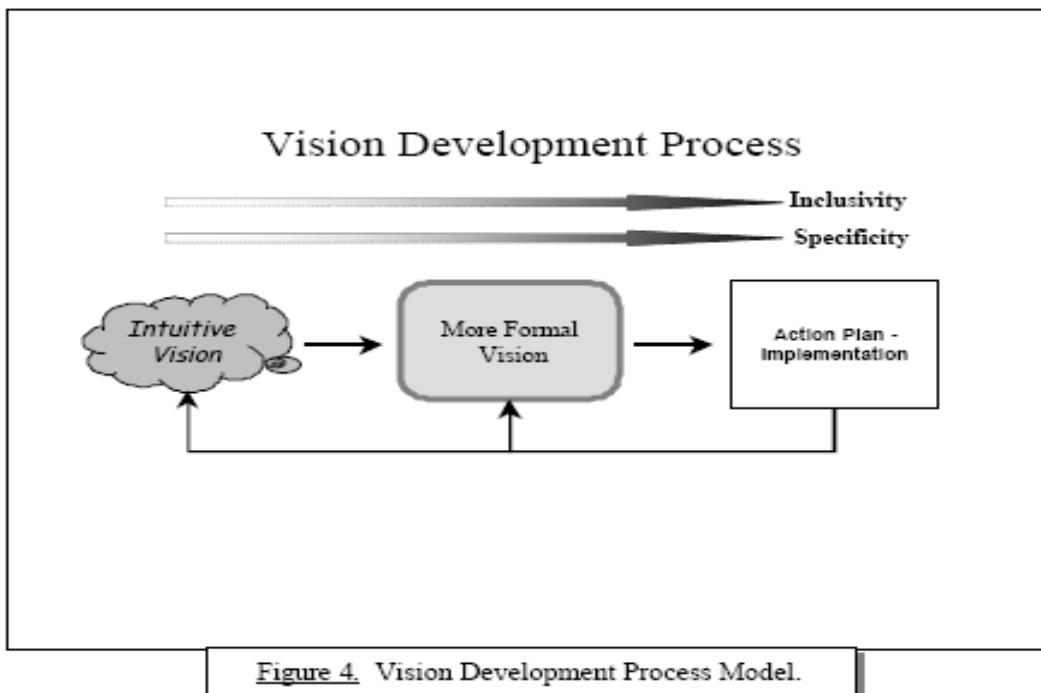


Figure 1 Vision Development Process

Based on Figure 4 in Sapp, Straight & Walz (1999, p. 66)

Appendix A provides a copy of the article on the visioning process developed by Charles Sapp, Bonnie Straight, and Jim Walz as a class project at Regent University's School of Global Leadership and Entrepreneurship.

A schema of the learning process at NWC is included in Appendix B that encourages reflection on how each area of campus might participate in A Vision for Learning. I would hope we'd have more suggestions on enlarging these categories as we go through the three theological points and try to take vision to action using all parts of our campus body. The schematic may have left off things but please forgive me if so. My intention is to further discussion, not to define or prescribe who does what, where.

<sup>6</sup> A term used by Sam Kaner in A Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making



## An Overview of Theologically Informed Questions and their NWC Vision Counterparts

The following provides an overview to the heart of this paper. In Part II, three theological questions are presented, analyzed, and applied to the four elements of Northwestern College's Vision for Learning. The concepts are introduced here.

### T-1. How does Trinity Inform Community?

V-1. Especially but not Exclusively, Trust, Love, and Worship God

Trinity, by nature of being relational, suggests that to be imitators of Christ, we must also live and work in community. In the NWC educational context, this could mean creating space for more group work in the classroom, as well as residential forms of community-building. It could also lead us to find ways to utilize new learning space that already exists but is not recognized structurally due to our penchant for measuring what we already know we can measure. Perhaps new reflection on Trinitarian theology with journaled responses in affective and attitudinal areas, using situations where we really must trust and love God and others as we serve (service learning) will complement/supplement what already happens (although at this point is less measurable than other areas of knowing).<sup>7</sup> The end goal is that we form in students a reasonable facsimile of our community mission vision.

### T-2. How does Scripture Inform Worldview?

V-2. Especially but not Exclusively, Engage Ideas

How we approach Scripture, what we mean by Scriptural authority, how a learned hermeneutic impacts the acquisition and relative importance of knowledge in the humanities and sciences, and their ethical use—these and others are tied to the ongoing deconstruction and formation of worldview for a student at NWC. This corresponds as well to how we engage ideas, our second value, as well as what we believe about what we know and how we know it (epistemology). Our actual practice of sorting and ordering knowledge and “connecting knowledge to experience” (NWC’s 3rd Mission/Vision goal) is also impacted by what we believe the role of the biblical narrative to be in our particular setting, from a field of inquiry to classroom instruction. Obviously there is overlap in the discussion of these goals. I have tried to keep the discussion primarily centered on certain goals in each of the main sections of the paper.

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<sup>7</sup> Taylor University’s Psychology Dept. (Dr Stephen Snyder and Katie VanDyke) have developed such an instrument and has begun using it with some of their accredited service-learning. “The first purpose of this study was to assess intercultural developmental changes of students involved in the Lighthouse program during January 2008 by comparing their scores on a pretest compared to their posttest. The analysis of this purpose included a comparison of all 23 scales of the Taylor University Intercultural Inventory (TUII) which measures intercultural development. The next analysis assessed the degree of change that took place in students’ in regard to Taylor University’s Common Learning Objectives. A pretest vs. posttest analysis was also conducted on the Center of Global Engagement Outcomes, and Taylor University’s Core Values but they will only be summarized in the executive summary.”



### T-3. How does Incarnation Inform Service?

V-3, 4. Especially but not Exclusively, Connect Knowledge and Experience and Respond to God's Call

Incarnational reflection has much to do with intentionally linking service to learning with the ultimate goal that our education is to serve others, as Christ became a servant, laying aside rights and privileges (Phil. 2:1-13). This attitudinal, volitional and actualized servant-learning is part of what Christ's Spirit offers in forming in us God's new image—knowledge is not power to be used for self but for others. This corresponds to the area of vocare or calling in our vocation.



## Application to the Culture of Northwestern College

### Adjusting our Practice to fit our Purpose

The foundation of any culture lies in the way it answers the question, "Where do reality and power reside?"

### Insights from Missiology

Missionary often begins with reflection on a people group or culture in its setting, especially noting areas of perceived needs as named by cultural insiders. The purpose of such reflection is to critically contextualize the Gospel in a particular place and time. Knowing the culture allows us to correctly translate God's love into metaphors, phrases, stories and paradigms that faithfully communicate Gospel in ways appropriate to its host culture. The first task is examining our expectations of a culture by listening.

One best understands a culture by listening to its gatekeepers and those that live within a culture. We might ask "Who are the insiders (emic) at NWC? What voice is expected of Students?" How do we view Faculty? Where would we place Administration? What educational roles are fulfilled by Staff? Or, do we see all parts with equal value but playing different roles? Who will tell us where reality and power reside and how it affects learning? How do we as faculty keep from projecting our perceptions of what the students' needs are into the center of the discussion and not listening to what the students really are saying? That is, where do we go for most of our clues when answering Parker Palmer's question above, "Where do reality and power reside?"

Cultural contexts are not neutral—they are value laden and carry a veritable train-full of meanings that will influence how we decide about future changes. Because our context has much to teach us and because it is the culture in which any changes must live, I believe it is important to first introduce part of the possibilities a dialogue can address through a slice of NWC culture. Specifically, what is reflected in very recent discussions and dialogue about Gen Ed curriculum?

### Avoiding Cultural Imperialism and Imposition

Our educational context carries two traditions—faith-confessional/generically Reformed and the academe of higher education. These are paradigms we use to accept or reject methods, models and structures. In crossing cultures, it is viewed as unwise to import methods or practices that work in one culture directly into another.

An outlandish but not unknown example is to use the baseball diamond analogy of spiritual growth developed by a Californian mega-church to communicate spiritual growth in say, Uganda. Getting around the bases to home (which means a fully functioning church member who does outreach) is just not part of that African culture. In such a case the assumptions and beliefs that produce viable structures are being overlooked because somebody didn't take the time to rethink their world in light of soccer!

In the same way, we may borrow models of planning or assessment from the academe that are said to be excellent and promise to be "integrative" yet such models may not comprehend or work well in our confessional context; in which case we will be trying to score home runs on a soccer pitch.



Fowler (as cited by Hastings, 2007) critiques leading North American theorists in the field of practical theology and academic issues (Edward Farley, David Tracy and Don Browning) for failing to understand the importance of both theological and social science resources operating with different norms for their respective fields of inquiry. This typically results in the omission of a “theory of divine praxis” due to “tacit cultural assumptions adhered to within their various North American Universities” (Hastings, 2007, p. 5).

Hastings rightly locates this culturally academe way of thinking to “the pre-reflective habitus that infuses the cultural location of any theorist [and] clearly exerts a strong, even if not determinative influence on his or her mode of investigation” (p. 5). The habitus “discloses the normative boundary conditions of what a given collectivity considers to be reasonable and unreasonable, possible and impossible” (p. 184).

If NWC is not careful in choosing its curricular models it may inadvertently, in spite of all good will and intent, steer toward end results that do not match our distinctive view of Christian higher education.

### A Place for Interactive Critique of a Critique Model

Many of the curricular models are rooted in the Enlightenment where the educated human image is primarily a “self-critical epistemological Subject” whose fundamental characteristics are “critical reason and volitional autonomy.” Reason is the “prime mediator” serving this human self-image of responsible freedom raising the problem of a “responsible self” left without substantial critique or reformation from the distinctively Christian perspective of “gospel.” Hastings (2007) sums up the context of such “tacit cultural assumptions” as a false dualism where “revelation and faith” are seen as “non-cognitive, existential or experiential-expressivist” and as a dualism between “academic learning” and “revelation and faith” (p. 8).

The model that best serves our unique calling in Christian higher education is a revealed one, one that has a telos, a purpose or ultimate goal, with its ultimate identity formed out of rational reflection on *imago dei*, the image of God. Revelation is not left standing outside the door of the house that reason (alone) built. There is a universal story-teller who, through learning, invites us into the story. This relational model offers a basis for real educational praxis that fosters “trust, love and worship of God” and “response to God’s call” in ways that can be assessed qualitatively. Qualitative analyses can show tendencies and growth in affection and volition by noting the expansion of linguistic and metaphorical categories and their re-ordering based on deeper relational understanding of God’s person (Romans 8:28-29).

A major impetus to write this paper is in fact the reasonableness (argued long and well during the Enlightenment) of both bringing to light all positions as to their ultimate logic and proposing new models that take us beyond mere critique. This means that we inspect the ultimate logic of academic excellence and holistic student growth through assessment appropriate to each, based on the four major goals in our vision statement.



For this however, we need more than what has been the dialectical model and propose an engagement that includes community engagement of learning with Word (specifically Gospel) and world. I would refer to this type of reflection together as a critical realist epistemology through a mediated triologue.<sup>8</sup>

It is at this very crucial point where work on and through our common vision statement becomes either the fulcrum for transformational learning or a place for manipulative sales-to-the-Christian-public rhetoric. And it is here as well that we can do with an infusion of campus-wide theological dialogue that is Trinitarian and incarnational, knowing that "The Christian confession of the Triune, relational God provides an enduring, comprehensive and creative mode of rationality for encountering and rejoicing in the polymorphic understanding of the human self . . ." (Hastings, 2007, p. 168).

Our educational roots in reformed and reforming in light of Scripture can be utilized as facts that bring "reality and power" (Palmer, 2004) to our learning culture, supporting the educational tree in life-giving nourishment, or existing as curious, though dried and atrophied, appendages.

### Toward Implementation

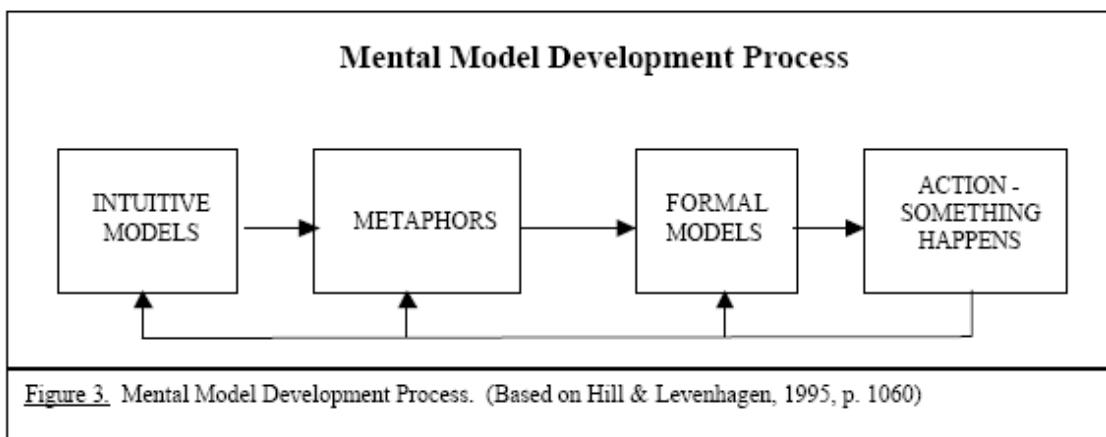


Figure 2 Mental Model Development Process  
Based on Sapp, Straight, & Walz (1999, p. 64)

### Our Context in the GETF Discussion and Reflections on Gen Ed

What we do reveals what we value. The existence of the GETF (Gen Ed Task Force) and its work can be viewed as a contextual, *sitz im leben* where the work of structural implementation gives clues as to underlying educational assumptions and beliefs, expressed as methods or *praxeis*. Ultimately these structural incarnations, if well-grounded, will implement our vision. Christ is the expression of Trinitarian love. If we understand the fullness of a gospel worldview as part and parcel of public knowledge then we will suffer and muddle through toward the telos God calls us to, "believing in order to understand" (Augustine) how to make a great education even better (Newbigin, 1995a, pp. 17-18).

<sup>8</sup> For a full discussion of this see Paul Hiebert's Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues, Part I pp 13-103, where the effects of various epistemological positions are reviewed in light of cultural engagement. His use of triologue reflects the way Lesslie Newbigin structures many of his arguments. Triologue is the use of anthropology, biblical story-line (theology) and culture in asymmetrical tri-polar relational dialogue.



"The impetus to reevaluate Northwestern's general education program originated from a required campus-wide assessment, Faithful to our Heritage, Looking Forward to Our Future." Comments by the faculty about our program prior to the work of the Gen Ed Task Force make note to avoid, "'piecemeal' tinkering of the program and 'piecemeal' changes. One faculty called for an 'articulation' of the 'overall mission of General Education and more holistic examination of General Studies'" (Gen Ed Task Force Report, 2008, p. 2).

Therefore the GETF is addressing a problem described in the report as follows:

The Northwestern Mission sets out an admirable set of goals, many of which imply student learning, but which are not framed as learning objectives. Some of those goals, as stated, are not easily measured. The General Education program lists objectives, but these are not necessarily college-wide goals. . . . A task force that includes faculty, staff, and students is currently being formed and will propose the learning objectives, consistent with the mission of the college, to be adopted campus-wide (Faithful to our Heritage, 1995-2005, pp. 2-3).

The GETF will then

describe learning outcomes and explore how various components of students' experiences are related to them, including the general education curriculum, major programs, and co-curricular activities. A second task force will follow and examine General Education and its assessment so that student learning is improved (p. 217).

A Vision for Learning, in keeping with the mandate, offers four outcomes, "in keeping with this commitment [the description of a community rooted in Scripture and the confessions of Reformed theology that provide a theological background to pursue liberal arts education as worship experienced in community to the glory of God], that we intend Northwestern graduates to be persons who trust love and worship God, engage ideas, connect knowledge and experience and respond to God's call."

## Translation: From Vision and Mission to Student Formation

### Mission in General

All mission is essentially translation (Sundkler, 1965). We are translating what we believe to be the essence of our reason to exist in the educational realm into some structural and observable form so that students become something and can do certain things as a result.

### Process in General

Since one cannot translate all values at once, vision statements are typically formed into mission statements which are then broken down into major goals. These goals can be described as actionable and assessable statements of purpose that are specifically reflecting one core value at a time.

### Questions a Good Translation Must Answer

The questions always asked of translations, whether of a Greek philosopher, Shakespeare in the Bush, a poem in another language, the Bible or a mission statement are generally something like, "Is what was



translated a fair and reasonable statement of the author's intent? Is what is being translated relevant and comprehensible to the target audience?" Ultimately these are the questions of integration and integrity. Is there integrity in the translation? This would mean that the words, concepts or aspects of language chosen to convey original meaning actually do so reasonably well?

#### Translation is Difficult Because of Many Concepts and Paradigms are Reflected in the Words and Phrases Chosen to Convey Meaning

Translation is a difficult and unwieldy process, requiring a managed flow of the core values and ideas into forms that mean what the original document is intended to mean. Some concepts are prior to others and inform subsequent concepts so they must be stated first. For instance, our commitment that students trust, love and worship God is a defining commitment. It calls us to avoid some epistemological positions presently employed in higher education especially if those ways of thinking and acting lead to forming people who hold positions contrary to our core values of the Christian faith. It is first for good reason. Likewise our goal that students respond to God's call is our ultimate result, engaging ideas and connecting knowledge with experience are to serve this final or finishing result. And response to God's call is a reflection of all of our first three goals because it shows a fully formed and integrated person, one who can reason and work with others in love, keeping commitments and engaging in glorifying God as a final result of their education and life.

#### Translations are Easier When the Process is Broken in Aspects of the Task

So some questions are especially appropriate to frame the process:<sup>9</sup>

- What are we translating?
- How are we to do it?
- Where will it be translated or attempted? In what named and intentional learning spaces or experiences through our campus community will it be translated?
- Who will be the main players? Have they been named? Does it represent comprehensively the social capital and resources we have at NWC? Who are the intended recipients?
- When will it happen? During what periods of time will this take place? When will we know it is happening enough so we can call it a translation? Will we measure our efforts somehow? Should we try to measure what we are doing? Are there ways to know something significant is happening without particularly measuring all the results?
- Why are we laboring to do this?

#### Answers from Specifically Applying These Questions to the NWC Context

- What? Our V4L document stated values encapsulated fairly by the framers of the document into four main areas, that are stated as goals reflecting our distinctly Christian values in education, resulting in students formed as people who: (a) Trust, love and worship God; (b) Engage Ideas; (c) Connect Knowledge and Experience; (d) Respond to God's call.
- How? Through Christian liberal arts instruction which includes a whole campus, resident environment
- Where? In all the educational spaces, events and experiences we have and we can create using curricular, co-curricular, formal, non-formal and informal learning environments

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<sup>9</sup> See Jane Vella "WWW" Questions and Taking Learning to Task



- Who are the intended recipients? Students. Who is called to deliver on the mission promise and its premises? Faculty, Staff and Administration as stewards, servants and co-laborers with the named Trinitarian God revealed specifically in Jesus Christ in our Vision for Learning.
- When will it happen? Our part occurs during the four years we offer in response to their engagement in an educational contract with us. We hope it continues on throughout all of life as they apply knowledge and skills, with attitudes of love and trust through what we hope will be their vocare to live their lives in worship in service to the God we have named as the source of all educational light.
- What for? So that we are an institution of integrity before God and before all people, fulfilling our educational goals with a faithful excellence that draws others to NWC and the continuance of our educational mission together.

Translation depends on faithfulness to the original concepts or ideas. This faithfulness to the original intent must express itself through words, metaphors and descriptive phrases that reflect the character of what is being translated in language comprehensible to our community and faithful to our heritage. Our freedom is to use new ways and expressions to convey the message. Our responsibility is to honor the values and intentions of the historical community of NWC, going back to its founders.

### A Word on Assessment

Assessment will be mentioned occasionally in the paper and my intent is not to suggest we add on to the non-teaching work load of professors by requiring more assessment but to balance and rethink what we are trying to do with assessment. I believe we over-assess the middle two goals of our Vision for Learning because they are easy and more quantitative and under-assess the first and last, because they are more difficult and qualitative.

When mentioning new exploration of assessment of Christian attitudes, values, affections, perceptions of worship of God and volitional engagement in serving others as part of response to God's call, I am envisioning the inclusion and use of primarily non-faculty governed areas of campus—student life, chapel and spiritual formation as well as expanded use of Lilly programs and service learning.

I am also convinced that the academic side of campus should encourage this kind of exploration, across differences in fields of knowledge and seek ways to integrate the totality of such learning into what we call Christian higher education at NWC.

Assessment is “a process that takes place during learning” so that “learning tasks are simultaneously assessment tasks” (Vella, 2000, pp. 47-48). This is where assessment has its primary meaning, in how we integrate what we say we want to do with what happens in the students. Assessment forms that students fill out, in my opinion, should state our Vision for Learning and our major goals and ask students to comment on how the instructor is doing on implementing and integrating these throughout the course, through the particular field of instruction used. This becomes a learning question, stimulating thought rather than checking off boxes. If the responses are done online, professors can have anonymous feedback from student comments that are directly pertinent to their discipline.

The following example came about in part because Lilly funding, Doug Beukelman, Marlon Haverdink, John Brogan and President Murphy could envision the possibilities of new learning space through a themed house intentionally created for learning and living in missional community on campus. The



following article includes reflections on student exploration of such new learning space through residence life.



## Student Reflections: Residence Life as Space for Learning in Community, Integration and Assessment

The following article provides an example of living in community at Mission House on NWC's campus. It was published in Northwestern Classic online magazine in spring 2007 and includes student reflections of their experience as members of the Mission House community. The article was written by Tamara Fynaardt (2007, pp. 14-16) and can be found online at <http://assets.nwciowa.edu/classic/public/content/pdf/cssp2007.pdf>.

### Community 101

Students and professor learn the struggles of living together in Mission House  
by Tamara Fynaardt

During their first mission experience in Cameroon in the 1980s, religion professor Dr. Rod Spidahl and his wife, Alice, lived in a mud hut with a tin roof, just like their neighbors. They served their new friends by digging wells and planting trees.

When the Spidahls were lonely or sick, people from the village served them by coming to sit with them. "Not just one, but two, three, four," remembers Spidahl. "They didn't say much, just sat there, loving not by doing, but by being."

Spidahl shares stories like these from his mission field experiences to illustrate to students in his theology and missiology classes how dependent mission efforts—both abroad and at home—are on being able to live in true community with those around you.

Spidahl explains, "In Cameroon, I learned something my Western, individualistic culture hadn't taught me: I came to understand that when we follow Jesus, we're not to follow him alone. We're expected to follow him in the company of other people."

This year [2007] the Spidahls have a different mission field: Northwestern's new themed residence known as "Mission House." Some of the 13 students living with the Spidahls in the two campus cottages are preparing for overseas missions. Most simply want to learn how to live with other Christians in a way that serves others and the kingdom no matter what vocation they pursue.

Serious Christians who are put in a community for the first time will often bring with them a very definite image of what Christian communal life should be, and they will be anxious to realize it ...

Life Together  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Spidahls and the students—all upperclassmen whose majors include art, communications, education, music, nursing, political science, religion, sociology and theatre—discussed their expectations last spring and kicked off the school year with a retreat.

They defined their purpose, in part, to live as an open and truthful community, depending on



faith in Christ, dedicated to challenging each other to learn about God, the world, and how God has gifted each to serve.

They committed to gather at least three times each week: Thursday mornings for breakfast and prayer together, Sunday evenings for a meal of ethnic food and learning about mission efforts in another culture, and Tuesday nights to study Scripture and Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Christian martyred by the Nazis.

Everyone came home from the idyllic retreat eager to begin living with each other and serving one another and the campus more in the way Christ intended.

... but God's grace quickly frustrates all such dreams. We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God, who will thwart our plans and frustrate our ways time and again by sending people across our path with their demands and requests.

Bonhoeffer

In one of three journals kept in the common areas of the Mission House, someone wrote: "[Theologian] Henri Nouwen defines community as 'the place where the person you least want to live with always lives.'" The writer continues, pointing out that Nouwen says we usually surround ourselves with people we most want to live with, forming a club or clique. "Anyone can form a club," says Nouwen. "It takes grace, shared vision and hard work to form a community."

Mission House residents have found Nouwen is right—frustratingly so. The truth is, living in community might be a lot easier if it weren't for the people you're living with.

"I expected we'd be open and honest with each other right away because we'd all said that's what we wanted," says Ruth George, a senior art major from San Jose, Calif., who hopes to be a missionary in Asia next year. "It was definitely not like that." It turns out the what and how of forming intentional community mean something different to everyone.

Chris Rensink, a senior education major from Clinton, Wis., echoes George's experience. "Some came in ready for Mission House to be their ultimate Northwestern community. Others embraced it as yet another community, in addition to communities they are already a part of on campus."

Rensink explains that some Mission House residents had ideas for a lot of service projects, others for plenty of socializing and bonding. And some, like him, who already are heavily involved across campus, resisted any additional obligations.

How could they serve the campus when they couldn't even agree on how to serve each other?

Within weeks, the Mission House residents' plans for a year of harmonious, grace-filled community seemed misguided and unachievable. Spidahl listened to their struggles and wondered himself at times if the Mission House would come apart. "Students said, 'This isn't what I thought it would be. Everyone's not like me. I'm being asked to give too much.'



"The students have gone through a shaping, a bending—even a breaking—that's been painful," Spidahl says. They've experienced disillusionment, suffering and a stubborn unwillingness to sacrifice for the sake of community. For Spidahl, it proved something positive was happening. "Struggle is foundational to learning," he says.

The community of faith does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and of one another.

Bonhoeffer

Spidahl and the students agreed not to quit—to be tenacious in their pursuit of loving and serving one another. The students made concessions, compromises and attempts at sacrificing their time and other commitments for the sake of the Mission House community.

When someone was angry or misunderstood, they made second, third and fourth attempts at seeking forgiveness and understanding.

George says she tried to improve her willingness to be vulnerable. "We have this idea that we don't have to share problems we're facing because it only affects me. I'm going to retreat and fix this myself. That individualism pulls a community apart."

Mission House residents still sought to serve beyond the house—to reach the whole campus—so instead of adding new projects, they decided simply to serve one another as they fulfilled the commitments they already had as athletes, campus ministry participants and performers. They helped Corinna find boxes for her Hunger/Homeless Ministry's Night in a Box event. They attended Katie's concerts, Cori's plays, and Jess's and Megan's athletic events. "We realized that what we were trying to achieve was more fundamental than a service project," says Rensink.

Christians can live with each other in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one. ... Christians experience the presence of God in the reality of the other.

Bonhoeffer

"You start as a servant," says George. "You need to be humble." Mission House residents Katie Gard, a junior music ministry major, and her roommate Preeti Elaiyavalli, a senior nursing major from India, were models of service and humility when Katie developed tendonitis last semester. "It was beautiful," says Spidahl. "Katie, who's extremely driven and accomplished, suddenly needed Preeti to tie her shoes."

Spidahl adds that honesty, a willingness to learn, and an unending capacity for forgiveness are also necessary for true Christian community.

George says learning to listen is essential. "Our individualistic mentality of everyone being equal has come to mean that everyone has a right to say what they think," says George. "We tend to start with talking, rather than listening."

She says one of her challenges has been learning not to talk—not to always state her opinions, no matter how well-founded or insightful. "I'm always trying to fix people's problems," she says.



“But I’m learning to let things mature in Christ’s own time.”

Elaiyavalli urges a teachable spirit—“because you’re going to be broken in ways you haven’t before,” she says.

“Individualism is the Achilles’ heel of Western Christianity, I think,” says Spidahl. “We emphasize my spirituality, my purpose in life, my salvation.” The Trinity, explains Spidahl, is God in community, and we, who are made in God’s image, are meant to live in community too.

The true Christian community values everyone, George explains. Everyone has a meaningful role. “It looks a lot like a body.”

The research and development aspect of college really occurs in pilot projects that can be funded by resources that do not come from student tuition dollars. Lilly monies fill a key role in allowing us to test new experiential learning models like the mission house community and the Romanian semester, among others. Such spaces for testing the incarnation of our vision are crucial if we expect to critically contextualize and be relevant in a rapidly changing and increasingly intercultural context.



## El Equipo del Electricista, Telos and Education

I am standing in Menards, a North Dakota version of Home Depot. Another errand has brought me here but I find myself attracted by and staring at a fascinating set of tools that seem to promise something . . . The title is in Spanish, French and English so it covers a pretty good intercultural slice of translated opportunity! Writing about education can make one feel strangely uneducated at times, so perhaps I'm stretching; but then there just might be enough of a connection here—something to plug our thoughts into together and get a line on some metaphorical energy . . .

First a few more facts on the six-piece toolset as follows: One 6 1/2" diagonal cutting pliers; a wire-stripper; a 2-in-1 AWG Lineman's pliers; one 8" long-nose pliers; a 2-in-1 reversible screwdriver; and a case to carry them- all for only \$19.95! Now I'm thinking that all these tools look pretty accessible and ready-to-use. I would appear to have the right stuff—as to size, composition, strength, and so forth. Looking on them and feeling the power seemingly offered in their mere acquisition or possession, I am tempted to believe much about these tools. I suppose I'd have to give them a try to really see what they can do.

Upon further ruminations through my bank of experiences with wiring, electricity and various projects—which is just enough to be dangerous, more questions enter the grid . . . and also my Cameroon experiences with a guy named Buuba Electricite' (pronounced ay-lek-tree-see-tay). With no formal schooling of any sort, he was “it” as the go-to guy. Burned on most of his face (not through electrocution but by a child-hood accident) he was a memorable figure and extremely savvy about doing—as far as explaining amps, ohms, watts and so forth, he didn't. But he knew what to put where and could solve any electrical problem at the delivery-to-the-house level! He was half-plumber too and I watched him in awe as he actually “fixed” a ruptured city water line, shooting geysers 20 feet into the air, with a truck inner-tube I supplied. Cutting it into strips and stretching and wrapping tightly, he reduced the torrent to nothing but a slight trickle. He was what they call in French-speaking Africa, a debrouillard. He had a lot of intuitive knowing and definitely knew way more than he could tell. But back to our analogy. . .

It seems I can know, in one sense, all about the tools and the facts of what they are supposed to do by attention to their characteristics and instructions on how to use them. With further study of some kinds of facts I might even become more informed than a certified electrician as to some specifics that describe exact measurements, composition and strength of the tools. Yet even in possession of numerous helpful and powerful facts, I still need the indwelt experience with how these bad-boys will actually allow me to enter this world, apply knowledge and harness (or guide) the electricity through the right circuits in my garage so that I can hook up my arc welder.

So I am left pondering the limits of “being an electrician” even as I am pondering the role of faith and learning, doing and being, classroom and guided experience in non-formal settings. How can a tool, like knowledge of a subject, best become an extension of me? How can Christian Education best deliver on a promise to “integrate” trust, love and worship of God while engaging all sorts of ideas, connecting knowledge and experience in such a way that actually forms students to respond to God's call?

If other learning experiences serve me well, I know this vignette in larger learning will come, in the best case scenario, with some disappointment when discovering that tools do not bring forth a fully wired and functioning system of delivery. And then I have to call the city electrical inspector as well, to verify



whether what I'm supposed to have done has in fact been done. In the worst case scenario, I might become fried electrician—in French or English (I don't know enough Spanish yet to die in that language). But even if I did, with all the facts, I suppose it really wouldn't matter much at that point to me!

Well, there it is—perhaps this comely, six-piece, all-one-should-need packet of electrician's tools offers some reflective lesson in ways of knowing. One being the objective pursuit of facts in a formal classroom setting—a particular, quantifiable and more readily assessable approach to bringing knowledge to students with facts that correspond well to measurement of amount of learning. And then the other as more nebulous, unpredictable, value-laden, qualitative and non-formal (or informal) and by its nature, known more readily by ability to deliver on knowing by applying many concepts to a problem and perhaps known as attitudes and volition, areas that assessment instruments find more difficult to quantify.

Yet the promise of education must include both kinds of knowing to some degree—what is our role and our responsibility? Our intent, based on the task of delivering our mission/vision statement is to disparage neither of these two ways of knowing—and to use them both as well, highlighting their respective individualities and their synergistic role in the process of forming something that is well-formed. I believe the Bible invites us into both modes of knowing (and more). Ways of knowing where we show more value toward experiential learning as informing the life of the mind and recognize synergy in such approaches—this means exploring ways to include service learning as well, since it particularly seeks to inhabit a space of incarnating across cultural and other boundaries, as servants of Christ.

Are we doing this? Obviously, yes, we are learning and serving. Can we do it better? Some think so. How would we know our goal when we get there? Possibly, as this paper suggests, by reflecting more on the goal or telos of our educational person, and what she/he not only knows but feels like, wills toward, acts like . . . in short how able he/she is as a graduate to live as an expression of a whole learning experience toward a full humanity ultimately expressed as a lived, Christ-centered life of learning.

Perhaps learning should allow the possibility of actually getting shocked—controlled to some degree of course! Also, that our distinctive kind of education is required by our mission to find/create structural spaces that will explore untapped potential in service-learning and experiential learning through a model that may be aided by reflection on the incarnation of God-in-Christ. Enough so that students learn in a community that is fully human; and reflect a calling that is fully divine (although we cannot individually reflect this but need our community).

### Muddling Through Toward Telos

And it seems the largest piece of knowing that must go with this six-piece set of tools is that we are given such instruments so that we may handle and steward rightly the awesome creative (and destructive!) energy of electricity. In the same way our knowing is powerful and can have tremendous opportunity for good as well as for evil—knowing is not generally value neutral, nor is its application. A culture of knowing is not value-neutral either, if it corresponds at all to characteristics of the world's cultures. I am reminded of Lesslie Newbigin's statement that "unless truth is constrained by love, it will get down on all fours and devour everything in its path." So we should be concerned about how we go



about “truthor in love” and recognize the Scriptural context for such truthor is a Trinitarian community engaged in serving through knowledge of the truth that has a cruciform ethos.<sup>10</sup>

As with all forms of power or endowment, we need an over-arching purpose to use the one form of knowledge rightly in the service of humanity made in the image of God. Einstein’s equation led to great endowment and power for humankind but only the experienced pathos<sup>11</sup> learned through identification with the reality of suffering can keep us within the bounds of what God promises as “life” in the use of creations gifts.

What facts alone can do, when unleashed without the constraining power of love, can be terribly destructive. Unfortunately, we must somehow enter the world of the effects of suffering, see and indwell this world as participants (not merely studying it), in order to avoid or at least temper our tendencies to inflict suffering on others. I believe this to be a qualitative and non-guaranteed risk that Christian education must continually take if it is to be distinguishable from value-less knowing. It is to require that students participate in forms of knowing where hurt, pain and suffering are not hypothetical and knowing is not abstracted from participation in what it means to love, trust, worship and respond to God’s call in, with and under a full engagement in the life of the mind.

I am arguing for muddling more in and through the difficulty of linking experiential learning programs, in non-traditional and non-formal environments, to learning goals and assessment (albeit different kinds of assessment) and fleshing these out with corresponding structures designed to bring students more fully into a learning experience informed by practical theology.

This means that our whole learning for a whole life connects our creation as persons made in the image of a Trinitarian God to a telos in Christ’s call. We enter such a learning space only through the particularly historical “worm-hole” we inhabit by God’s connecting us to Himself, in space and time. This is possible only as we are redeemed and rediscovered by God’s grace and mercy, realizing our new and divinely informed human self only in the incarnational action of Jesus Christ and our habitus in that event by faith. Reason then is informed by Christ so as to further God’s work in us, allowing us to see, by faith, Christian liberal arts as worship.

The areas in the main sections that follow are discussed as theological points that engage our context, through the telos of the four purposed outcomes arising from our A Vision for Learning, which functions practically as our college mission/vision statement at present due to its common college-wide acceptance. While the theology of Trinity, Biblical understanding and Incarnation all engage particular goals more than others, the boundaries are not intended to be exclusive so there are overlapping conceptual discussions happening throughout.

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<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 4:1-17 is instructive in this regard and John Stott’s (1979) comments on “truthor in love” as well from his work God’s New Society.

<sup>11</sup> “a quality that evokes pity or sadness” (Compact Oxford English Dictionary, 2009)



## Part II: Theological Questions

### T-1. How does Trinity Inform Community?

V-1. Especially but not Exclusively, Trust, Love, and Worship God

"See me; feel me; touch me; heal me . . .

Listening to you I get the music

Gazing at you, I get the beat

Following you, I climb the mountain

I get excitement at your feet . . .<sup>12</sup>

Tommy: A Rock Opera, lyrics by Pete Townshend (1969)

And so it goes, "Right behind you . . ." students are following professors into ways of learning that are passed on to generations, sometimes without sufficient critique. Perhaps one of the strongest yearnings of a post (post) modern community of students is for that of meaning through relationality. While professors often affirm the primacy of the life of the mind, students gravitate toward activities and time where meaningful connections with others can occur and learning can be non-formal and informal, surrounded by a safe-space of trust. "When we asked students to think of a specific, critical incident or moment that had changed them profoundly, four-fifths of them chose a situation or event outside the classroom" (Beers, 2008, p. 71). Of course one has to ask what kind of change is implied here and so forth. In any case we should listen to what the learners are saying about transformation, where it occurs and how it corresponds to what we think is happening as professors, staff or administration. Assumptions make . . . well, let's say they must be tested before we can say they have value.

The search for models and the ideal human in Christian community brings the metaphor of Gen 1:27 of image and likeness of God, male-female, into our discussion arena, where human beings are purposefully made in the physical to reflect a mystery of "being" that transcends the physical—and this image is Trinitarian. God's intent for us comes out of His Being-in-Community eternally.

Theological shifts in the West over the last one hundred years include a renewed interest in a "social analogy" of the Trinity that dates to the patristic era and is characterized by relationality<sup>13</sup> rather than individual substantiality (Grenz, 2001). Human beings becoming "fully alive" in community (Irenaeus) through participation in relationships characterized by "love, will, knowledge and purposeful action" (Plantinga, as cited in Grenz, 2001). This larger view of relationality encompasses other themes and discussions ranging from Eastern Orthodox to feminist theology and the social aspects of liberation theology as well. While these impact us more than we may realize, they are beyond this paper's range—

<sup>12</sup> Check out a rendition at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJCBF0t\\_K\\_c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJCBF0t_K_c)

<sup>13</sup> Relationality goes to the concept of Trinity to find its grounding in a Being of love. Relationality is what God is and therefore what God does (Trinitarian). Christ is the image of God through which God worked in the OT (preincarnate and mediated events that reflected God's character) and NT incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection. Relationality in Christ is what we are created for. Particularly, with those located around us and globally in being part of this new humanity in Christ called to be instruments of redemption. The point is that we are called to find our full humanity in this telos or relationality and not in anything less, be it nation, tribe, family, life-goals, moral vision, political action and so forth, although all these are viable ways of expressing relationality in our particular context in a Christ-shaped or cruciform way.



although not beyond the discussions that may result regarding the spaces we create in our community of learning.

The doctrine of the Trinity has traveled a long and winding road through the highly structured views of middle ages, to the reshaping of Trinity in the image of the natural sciences. According to Grenz, it has furthered suffered in reduction through Kant, Schleiermacher and Ritschl to a reasoned and empirical knowing. Yet the a more comprehensive Trinitarian dialogue seems to have found a home in the multi-cultural and East-meets-West world-need of today's human community and in the relational emphases on truth in post-modernism.

Going back farther, Augustine is likely the most influential patristic theologian in shaping the doctrine of Trinity for the West and especially credited with defining this *imago dei* as “power” or “an endowment” (Cairns as cited in Grenz). His primary focus was not on different levels of structural interpretation of image and likeness (as was prevalent in works by Lombard and Aquinas) but on the telos or “forming again of the soul in accordance with the image or likeness of God” (Augustine as cited in Grenz). Human's have this capacity (*capax Dei*) because the fall did not destroy rationality but left it twisted and incomplete without a relationship to the Triune God, one characterized by “the primacy of the Son” and “relationship to the true and undistorted image, that is, the Divine Word” (Grenz, p. 153).

Let's use GPS metaphor here and compare two people, each with a different GPS system. One has three satellites right overhead and therefore can operate under the necessary conditions of triangulation where three references are needed to establish a full and accurate location including elevation, speed, and latitude/longitude, with accuracy to within 20 feet. The other has a GPS capable of only locating one or two satellites. If full rationality is represented by a person that can reference: (a) Others; (b) The world; and (c) The Trinity; while the other person has no awareness of the capacity for Trinitarian knowing, or believes the satellite representing this Personal knowledge is either lost or broken-down in space, then “locating” one's true self is reasonably more likely with more points of reflection, especially since one needs points “outside of self” for any kind of accurate reading.

The concept of triangulation has been used in navigation and locating points for centuries, long before it became associated with unhealthy relationships! In any case, rationality and reasoning are only limited to the human sphere if we establish a priori conditions that place them there. We cannot prove they do or do not exist within the Trinity. However, like Pascal's Wager<sup>14</sup>, to miss out on a fully functioning GPS is really sad—they are expensive and amazingly helpful when used to their capacity!

Augustine continued to develop the idea that divine image is rationality. The purposeful reforming of person in the context of Christian higher education, in God's image, is seamlessly connected in Augustinian thought to “love and charity” which are “the pre-occupation of the mind of Augustine” (Sullivan, 1963, p. 195). The trust relationship based on a Trinitarian view of God calls for the expression of love in our educational goals and its incarnation in our ultimate formation of students.

Augustine's dictum of “love God and do as you please” can be seen as reflective of what NWC seeks to do as we place value-laden qualities and volitional affections like trust, love, worship and response to

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<sup>14</sup> The risk of not believing in a God and being wrong has such great consequences that it is logically more reasonable to believe, even if it be found one has misbelieved.



God's call on equal par with engaging ideas and connect knowledge to experience. This loving and doing is an amazing and difficult distinction to maintain in the general culture of the academe.

Where and how do learning goals formed to actionable areas reflect equal on the four goals of our Vision? That is, forming students who will "trust, love and worship God . . . engage ideas . . . connect knowledge and experience . . . and respond to God's call."

These areas involve full engagement of rational, volitional, affective and bodily participation and therefore can be best served by educational structures that are purposefully designed toward assessment of all these categories.

We begin with this brief focus on Augustine because in Aquinas's "recasting the Augustinian deposit, the centrality of Christ as the divine image that had characterized second century fathers like Irenaeus, fell by the wayside in favor of . . . the human person as the *imago dei*." (Grenz, p. 158). This shading away from Christ is a determinative factor for the direction of Christian higher education; for as purpose shifts, definitions become shaped more by culture and human reason than by a gospel worldview. In the end, Trinitarian purpose and being is informed, safe-guarded and ultimately fulfilled by Christ-centered incarnational action and our apprehension of it, as we can note in the following:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23).

Unity in Trinitarian terms, where the Holy Spirit is the love-glue that unites (Augustine), reflects a belief specifically as trust (assensus resulting in fiducia) leading to this unity of knowing through participation in this divine love in Christ. The complete unity is purposeful and kerygmatic, an embodied announcement to the world that the Father has sent the Son.

The Augustinian dictum "love God and do as you please" as well as "I believe in order to understand" (relied on heavily by Anselm of Canterbury) contain the elements of love and trust, so central to our Vision for Learning at NWC. The idea of an asymmetrical, bipolar relational unity is inherent in these statements, as can be noted.

Understanding something in a cognitive and reflective sense is enabled or more fully facilitated within a framework where one holds knowledge of Trinitarian truth through belief in Christ (a central part of the early creeds) as *a priori* to knowing God and all things more fully. This in contrast to a Gnostic knowing or the Hindu illusory view of historical events in favor of mystical or non-mediated knowing, that is, mediated by human senses and not particularly or distinctively through Christ.

NWC and its mission/vision is solidly grounded in Augustinian theology, reflected through its affirmations in confessional and reformed traditions. Luther and Calvin also relied heavily on Augustine.

However, there is much in Eastern Orthodox reflection on the Trinity to explore in terms of communion and community, so let's move then to discussion on this particular aspect and its application, called



perichoresis or the mutual interpenetration of loving relationship within the eternal and non-individualistic Community. Such reflection is helpful in that our penchant for viewing the Trinity is to see it as a projection of much of our individualistic cultural beliefs. By such an emphasis on individuality through the Enlightenment and the Cartesian “I think therefore I am,” ultimate personhood or self-image is assumed, often without critique, to be responsible if critical reason and volitional autonomy are fully developed. Reason then serves this view of self and mediates the individual self as “Subject’s relations to tradition, to human relations, and to the claims of ethical and religious ultimacy” (Hastings, 2007, p. 6).

In many ways we have become a culture of suspicion of anything that imposes upon this volitional autonomy. It is not accidental that we find it difficult to locate real space where theological dialogue actually informs practical expression of structures for learning, or where curricular development is mediated in biblical reflection on the Trinity as the informing story to guide our particular practices. For these reasons, steeping ourselves in a view of Trinity that begins with unity and love, rather than individuality, can be transformational.

The passage from John 17:20-23 above reflects perichoresis or interpenetration. An application would be to seek more inter-structural coordination where service learning, chapel and residential life supplement the academic life of the mind with the participation of the body in actions that lead to greater knowing than one field can produce alone. It could also apply to interdepartmental collaboration and to programs that could lead to better understanding through interconnection, mutuality and collaboration.

I think this is part of what drives our hopes for new Gen Ed classes—that integration is a function of interconnecting fields of study. What is important for a Christian college is to know why we can believe we are called to go there and live out this interpenetration of fields. In large measure, we can say we know it holds potential because it is part of the journey toward human maturity that occurs only in a Christ-shaped community where trust and love facilitate knowing.

Because trust and love demand not only the presence of others, but their free and responsible participation in our lives, the Trinitarian reflection from an Eastern perspective begins with the end goal in mind—worshipful unity.

### Perichoresis or Interpenetration

The God . . . who has his true being as the Father of the Son, and as the Son of the Father in the Spirit. God is love, and has true being in communion, in the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit- . . . [we] find our true humanity in ‘perichoretic unity’ with him and one another, who renews us in Christ’s image” (Grenz, 2001, p. 10).

Aside from being a fulfillment of the 1960’s “mutual admiration society” which was only community of two “my baby and me,” perichoresis goes beyond the “intimate indwelling and complete interpenetration of the persons in one another” to a “Trinitarian unity that goes out beyond the doctrine of persons and their relations: by virtue of their eternal love [which as Buber pointed out, looks to the other to be known in and through the other], the divine persons exist with . . . for . . . and in one another . . . so that an “understanding of the Trinity can only begin with the fellowship of a plurality of persons . . .” (Moltman as cited in Grenz, pp. 150, 174-176).



From an Eastern theologian and recognized authority on the Trinity, John D Zizioulas (1985), we find a refreshingly bold perspective, “Although the person and personal identity are widely discussed today as a supreme ideal, nobody seems to recognize that historically as well as existentially the concept of the person is indissolubly bound up with theology . . . the person as a concept and as a living reality is purely bound up with patristic thought. Without this, the deepest meaning of personhood can neither be grasped nor justified” (p. 27). His Trinitarian emphases also offer additional theses for our learning community.

From an extreme Western-culturalized philosophical position, Schliermacher’s departure into what is really anthropological theology (as opposed to a biblical anthropological view) does have part of the question right. He recognized that a real, human must be the ultimate embodiment of theological education. He just got the Christ-part conflated with his disbelief in Scriptural authority. N. T. Wright should have been born a couple of generations earlier!

The present cultural emphasis on the self as social construction recognizes the importance of others to our well being. But, it also becomes a “What’s true for you may not be what’s true for me.” Elevation of this ideology to the level of cultures by absolutizing the “social construction of reality” results in denying a meta-narrative where biblical Trinitarian image has the place of mediating human relationships. All is simply our particularistic views and therefore there are no “fixed and settled views of personal identity” (Wright, 2006, p. 6).

What is needed for more effective translation of the Trinitarian identity in each particular context? David Cunningham proposes recasting Trinitarian discussion by releasing it from “imprisonment . . . in dogma [alone] and “translating it into our present context . . . rendering more intelligible . . . to its profound significance for the shape of the Christian life” (Grenz, p. 9) Theologians like Martin Buber, Michael Polanyi, Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jurgen Moltmann, Emil Brunner and John Macmurray all emphasized a “social personalism” that was founded in Trinitarian reflection. “Without social relation there can be no personality” (p. 11).

It is certain that we need a full participation with each context, and all that contributes to personhood in that context, in order to deliver on faith, learning and living. The social aspects of learning require being in community learning events with one another and some means of intentional communion with God in those events. This is where residence life can provide space for more implementation of such learning.

Zizioulas (1985) finds it noteworthy that the early Fathers who were singularly academic theologians, “interested principally in Christianity as revelation” were not the ones to clearly define the “ecclesial being” as separate from created matter. Justin Martyr, Clement and Origen could not avoid the trap of Greek monism—it took the pastoral theologians, Ignatius, Irenaeus and then later Athanasius. These bishops understood that the “being of God could only be known through personal relationships and personal love. Being means life, and life means communion.” Further work by Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianszus and Gregory of Nyssa brought forth the concept that it is “communion” that makes things “be!”: nothing exists without it, not even God.” Ultimately true being comes from the person of God of course, not from communion “itself,” however the One who loves freely and affirms his identity by means of communion with other persons (pp. 16-17).



There is the other side of human personhood, that of the freedom of the individual within the responsibility of community, correspondingly necessary to preserve, and uniquely in a Christian understanding of Trinity as three-in-Oneness. In this reflection there is safety against the errors of absolutizing social organizations, or the state, leading to a communism that subverts and denies individual freedom. In other words, any so called “community” which does not come from “a concrete and free person” (hypostasis) and “which does not lead to concrete and free persons (hypostases) is not an “image” of the being of God. The person cannot exist without communion; but every communion which denies and suppresses the person, is inadmissible” (Zizioulas, 1985, p. 18).

We also continue to remember in Trinitarian reflection of the mediatorial role ascribed to Christ—God is known “through Him” and “in Him.” We “only approach God through the Son and in the Holy Spirit . . . the fact that man [and woman] in the Church is the “image of God” is due to the economy of the Holy Trinity, that is, the work of Christ and the Spirit in history” (Zizioulas, p. 19).

Respect for human ‘personal identity’ is perhaps the most important ideal of our time. The attempt of contemporary humanism to supplant Christianity in whatever concerns the dignity of man has succeeded in detaching the concept of the person from theology and uniting it with the idea of autonomous morality or with an existential philosophy which is purely humanistic. Thus, although the person and person identity are widely discussed nowadays as a supreme ideal, nobody seems to recognize that historically as well as existentially the concept of person is indissolubly bound up with theology (p. 27).

Appeals to Greek thought leave us with the Platonic person who has no eternal life except that the soul unite with another concrete body, acquiring another body as in a reincarnated sense . . . but this destroys the idea of personhood with a true sense of ongoing being. Aristotle left the soul to the individual but death dissolves both body and soul with a finality that again, destroys any sense of ontology or lasting being. Humans are therefore conceived in Greek thought as part of the cosmos, as is God and we are back to monism.

Roman thought was fundamentally centered in “ability to form associations, to enter into contracts, to set up collegia, to organize human life into a state. Thus personhood does not have concrete ontological being . . . ” (Man’s freedom is guaranteed by his submission to the state and his participation therein—it is not an ontological freedom but a political one that is the telos of Roman thought) (Zizioulas, pp. 25-28).

So the Greek fathers in Christianity reflected on Scripture in ways that freed “the world and man from ontological necessity” and also elevated “person” beyond the Greek tragedy or the Roman political actor and made being in communion with God and others the true mark of being human, the *imago dei*. We cannot overlook or forget that this occurs through the means of dialogue and reflection on the biblical concept of Trinity, where existing is not in and for self but as divine/human love which begets love and loving.

Theology (thought or speech about God) affirms the freedom the human person in academia or in society by grounding personhood in ontological and free existence rather than necessary existence.



## Transcending Human Limits of Role, Family, Tribe and Nation

Another way Trinitarian speech and thought about God helps us in our educational endeavor of building community, is that in Christ, ultimate human community is not conditioned by what we do, rather it is grounded in who we are in a new untarnished version of humanity.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:27-29). If we are left to particularistic cultural justifications there cannot be an image that is free for all to enter. Perhaps that is a wandering Aramean and such a small tribe was chosen for election and for the responsibility to bring healing and unity to the nations.

As noted in the Galatians passage, the eschatological<sup>15</sup> notion that all nations are in view begins in the remembering of the nations prior to and in the promise of Abraham "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3) It is also evident in Revelations, especially the vision of the Godhead in Revelation 5 where people from every tribe and nation have been purchased by the Lamb. The end of history awaits good news announcement to all nations! (Matthew 24:14).

According to Zizioulas, human personal freedom, identity, and responsibility, is only possible in Trinitarian reflection for God is what defines humanity. That is, freedom must not be dependent upon a lesser or reduced image of being human such as whether one thinks (Cartesian), or conditioned by how one is attached to the state (Roman) or necessitated by being an actor who defies the fates for a time (Greek Tragedy). Freedom in the person in the community of learning must also be free of natural or biological justification for family, tribe or ethnicity of origin. A Darwinian hypostasis does not free one to love others, especially neighbor, more than family and its extensions—more than instrumentality toward survival. We know this will not work and that it reduces human personhood. It is in Christ, who contains all of humanity in his death and resurrection and therefore in God, wherein humans are fully alive.

Human freedom in all community, including NWC, depends on the freedom God gives in Christ for individuals-in-community (as ethnicities) to be fully human and allow others the same full and non-conditioned space, within the character of personhood defined by Trinitarian and Incarnational communion with all humanity.<sup>16</sup>

All relationality goes to the concept of Trinity to find its grounding in a Being of love. Relationality is what God is and therefore what God does (Trinitarian). Christ is the image of God through which God worked in the OT (pre-incarnate and mediated events that reflected God's character) and NT (incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection).

Relationality is what we are created for. Particularly, with those located around us and globally in being part of this new humanity in Christ called to be instruments of redemption. The point is that we are called to find our full humanity in this telos or relationality and not in anything less, be it nation, tribe,

<sup>15</sup> Summing up of things, last things, end of time view.

<sup>16</sup> See Zizioulas, pp50-57 for a detailed expression of this argument of which I have provided a synopsis



family, life-goals, moral vision, political action and so forth, although all these are viable ways of expressing relationality in our particular context in a Christ-shaped or cruciform way.

The confusion for Western logic of how Christ as an individual can be “the way, the truth and the life” lies not in the statement of his saving or being (life) but in an assumption of what it means for Christ to be a person (not primarily an individual). To speak of Christ is to speak of the Trinity for all the Trinity is involved in Being “way, truth and life.” “Christ has to be God in order to be savior, but . . . He must be not an individual but a true person . . . Christology therefore removes the problem of truth from the realm of the individual [continually captive as the West is to such thinking vis-à-vis the Enlightenment] and of ‘nature’ to the level of person” (p 108). This places being, nature, substance, relationality, truth, and mode of existence on the same level and is a way beyond the reductionism of western definitions of ultimate personhood.

While we have reflected on Christology significantly, it is important to understand how that reflection on the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity or Holy Spirit also leads toward a community, as the outpouring of Pentecost demonstrated, God created a multi-national or transnational and multi-ethnic community. We have not chosen to make this a major point of reflection however.<sup>17</sup> The implications of drawing closer to the Spirit or being filled by the Spirit are that they do not create less community but more, they do not isolate but lead to greater communion interculturally. Division due to language and tribe is overcome in a genuine and cross-cultural love of the Spirit so that the church exists as “one” and as “many” at the same time, preserving the particularity of ethnicity while affirming the universality of the church.

### For possible discussion:

- How does a multicultural or multi-ethnic program allow space for non-conditioned acceptance community from the standpoint of the ethnicities involved?
- What faith-based presuppositions are required so as to define the space in which a community can learn to trust, love and worship?
- How might understandings of trust or love translate to best practices in a program so as to give the most space to non-conditioned interactions between individuals and/or ethnic groups?
- How does one bring learning goals like trust, love and worship onto a curricular par with goals like engaging ideas, even if the assessment criterion and instruments might differ markedly between these various ways of learning and knowing?

### Practicing Freedom, Responsibility and Love as Learning

In Cloud and Townsend's (1999) work *Boundaries in Marriage*, they posit three areas of human interaction that are primary in the biblical storyline of God and human relationships: freedom, responsibility (or accountability to necessary boundaries), and agape love. “God created us free. He gave us responsibility for our freedom. And as responsible free agents, we are told to love him and each other. This emphasis runs throughout the whole Bible” (pp. 24-25).

<sup>17</sup> See Kraus, *Community of the Spirit*



Perhaps we can glean some understanding from the marriage analogy, “when two people are free to disagree, they are free to love” (p. 9) and “the crucial element in the two people becoming one is that they must be complete in themselves . . .” (p. 88)

### Back to the Future: Assessment Expectations

There is great difficulty in the search for a standardized, one-size-fits-all method for assessing across fields. Such expectation of a common instrument does not reasonably acknowledge the depth and width of various ways of knowing possible in each field, program or discipline. Putting up “one ring to rule them all” is not the answer. I do believe in letting individual freedom, tempered by shared responsibility and guided by a love for Christian education become the means of developing appropriate goals and assessment.

So what about imagining:

- If all aspects of campus become fully engaged participants in forming students in different ways of knowing (see the diagram of various learning space on campus);
- If such formation has the freedom, discipline by discipline, let their field of knowing inform the goal structures and assessment instruments best suited to them, under A Vision for Learning (with administration seeing only that it is done by each department).
- If the areas of campus that prove especially suited to nurturing say “trust love and worship” or “response to God’s call” are free to develop qualitative assessment instruments, as such gospel and grace engendered characteristics demand.
- If the academic disciplines with their respective habitus are free to develop assessment in keeping with the field of study demanded by their program majors.
- Then, perhaps, a stronger marriage of academe and faith can be the result.

In this, each area sees the other as fully equal person under A Vision for Learning. Freedom to approach the four goals in that Vision through their discipline and responsibility to demonstrate they have assessment instruments that tell students and faculty about progress toward those goals are required. All areas are then mutually interdependent and bound together by a divinely inspired love of God and love of facilitating student learning in community. Freedom of each to approach the four mission/vision goals through their disciplines, responsibility of each to see that the goals are engaged and assessed at the level of program, event or classes out of a common love by each to make this strange marriage work well.

Assuming for the sake of furthering such explorations in the value of a Trinitarian-informed way of integrating various fields of study in reflection on perichoretic collaboration, a class under the heading of something like Social, Psychological and Theological Explorations in Community could be piloted. We could explore a question like “How might the freedoms, responsibilities and love offered from a particular cultural, ideological or ethnic perspective(s) compare to those offered from a Trinitarian and Incarnational perspective? If we had three or four very different cultures represented this could be quite insightful and perhaps something that could create a forum for campus wide discussion.



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### Related questions could pertain to present learning environment:

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- What are the limits of the formal structures of NWC in seeking to accomplish these areas?
- What other learning venues on campus exist that specifically promote group interaction, loving service to others resulting in more unity in the NWC community
- What new practices or structures could be explored? How might these be assessed?

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It seems to me that unless we put similar educational questions to the students, on a department by department basis, beginning in the freshman year and follow this up with assessment all through the senior year, we are assuming our educational goals will be communicated mystically, haphazardly, individualistically and even magically.

To be truly free to be in community as being for all eternity; to not live to grasp for today's materialism expressed in the capital of goods, services or human liberty without Christ, this is that freedom offered through reflection on our humanity in the image of Eternal Community of Trinity. This frees us to serve out of no constraint whatsoever, if we so choose—but it does not negate the value of state, law or requirements so that humans are held responsible for their humanity. In terms of the gospel it informs us as to how to go about developing these characteristics in Christian community—not by law, but by grace.

### Creating a Missional Learning Task Together as Applied Theology in Community

Now to apply the theological fact, of perichoresis for instance, is the hard work, for which we need each other, campus-wide, as dialectical partners. I am suggesting that we discuss and plan to implement the designed integration of this or similar theological insights as "learning tasks," making the Gen Ed Task Force a place of applied integrative learning using this example as one of several pilot classes that could begin as freshman and complete as seniors, testing not only various content in these classes, but methodology as well.

"Teacher, learner and knowledge [are] in a dynamic reciprocal unity, dialogic teaching is proposed as transformative exchange, where teachers and learners are involved in a co-learning and co-teaching process, thereby cultivating the development of an authentic community of learners, characterized by sharing and support, along with cognitive challenge. The crux of dialogic teaching is that the teacher as mediator respectfully listens (in Bakhtian sense) to how students apprehend and construe phenomena related to academic themes and then guides them through a process of co-inquiry toward reflective, scientific understanding" (Gravett & Henning, as cited in Vella, 2000, p. 8).

A learning task is a way to structure dialogue. It is an open question put to members of the group who have all the resources they need to respond . . . A common pattern of teaching has been for the professor to lay out the content (skills, knowledge, attitudes) and then design exercises so that learners work with what they have heard or seen in order to learn it. This pattern is not only what teachers expect to do. It is what learners expect as well (Vella, 2001, pp. xiii-xiv).



In this alternative method, teaching and learning “are integrated . . . the learning task is the overall design.” In this way, a learning-in-community approach becomes the center of our education; not the learner or the teacher or our educational goals alone, but learning-together. This would represent an epistemological shift and corresponding structural changes representing our Christian distinctive—and it would take a lot of grace to work through!

Because we are making life-long learners (educators included) we accept that learning involves both knowledge and participatory engagement in discovering and applying that knowledge. If we accept methods that promote “passive learners, we are learning [also] how to be passive” (Vella, p. 4). Trinitarian unity learned through incarnational activity moves us away from a false passivity theologically and educationally. For comparison, note the movement in Eph. 4:1-15 from our Christian calling to keep unity as a reflection of Trinitarian Being (vs 1-6) to incarnational theology and implementation through Christ of the gifts we have been given so that we are reformed in His image (vs 7-13), to our part as active participants in a perichoretic community responsible to the learning task so that “the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (vs 17).

Vella’s learning tasks can be studied further in her book “Taking Learning to Task” if we seek more varieties of method to supplement the already fine educational ethos at NWC. The idea development of person, from the Trinitarian mediated by incarnation approach, is intriguing. Bloom notes, “There is little doubt that our culture places tremendous weight on knowledge or information as an important characteristic of the individual . . . Because of the simplicity of teaching and evaluating knowledge, it is frequently emphasized as an educational objective out of all proportion to its usefulness or relevance for the development of the individual” (Bloom, 1964, p. 34).

In our distinctive form of education, how can we make use of Trinitarian insights about a social-self that applies the best theological and educational facts to the task?

By way of example for discussion, I offer a pilot course proposal that has not yet been approved for credit by the appropriate faculty and administrative committees as an example of how reflection and life with God in community could further our integrative task at NWC. Much of this is already happening in the Mission House, now in its fourth year with twenty-one male and female participants. It is hoped such models can provide discussion and ways forward.

Northwestern College Iowa  
REL 355 Missional Community Practicum 2 CREDITS

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

For sophomores, juniors and seniors, this practicum gives students the opportunity to practice trust, love and worship of the Trinitarian God, with practiced events and reflection toward Christ-like growth and transformation. This occurs in life together and through participation in a community environment intentionally focused on expressing love and compassion across boundaries for a world God redeemed.

Weekly activities include journaling, intercultural meals and contextually appropriate etiquette, studies in Scripture about community/mission, readings in Bonhoeffer and Nouwen, scripture reading and prayer. Occasional activities involve required attendance at a Fall retreat to ground



participants in the basics of community together and a Winter Stillness Retreat in January. Other activities that will enhance intercultural awareness, community responsibility and relational understanding of others will be encouraged by those participating in the house, envisioning and working to carry out our objectives.

Enrollment by permission of the professor.

Minimum 14 weeks on site as a participant to receive credit. Fall or Spring semesters. Pass/No Pass basis. Total of two credits allowed

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The practicum will facilitate learning in students toward:

- 1) Discerning and developing gifts that help us discern God's calling in service together, to one another and to communities in and beyond NWC.
- 2) Reflecting on Trinitarian Equality and Unity in relation to being human, the diversity of the human family and relational transformation through lived community
- 3) Utilizing readings on Incarnational life and a theology of the cross to help us struggle toward the integration of faith, learning, and living from a biblical perspective.
- 4) Discovering together ways of living that promote community and Christ-life
- 5) Promoting proficiency in creating and living out a mission statement that utilizes the NWC core values, is inclusive of the values of those living in the house and seeks to promote this vision beyond the college experience
- 6) Taking turns leading by creatively serving others in practical expressions of love
- 7) Practicing spiritual disciplines with others, especially in ways to honor the authority of God in our lives by reading Scripture as worship in times together, countering a culture of individualism and relativism with the embodiment of Christ's presence, love and guidance in grace-filled relationality to one another.

#### REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) The student will participate in the retreat at the beginning of the semester
- 2) The student will commit to participating in all scheduled events as outlined by the professor on site, with an 80% minimum involvement.
- 3) The students will create, write, review and live under the mission statement and goals they set for the house during the fall retreat and participate in fulfilling those duties as an integral part of the community called Mission House.
- 4) The student will maintain a journal with a minimal 100 word entry per week. The journal entry will utilize recent events and readings that have impacted learning in the areas of trust and love for God, worship and clarity in understanding Christ's call to serve with special attention to ways such attitudes can become integrated into our learning to live in community. Journals will be submitted for review monthly to the Professor Spidahl
- 5) The students agree to make space for dialogue with others and with the professor as needs arise in the community and be willing to discuss areas relating to their participation, struggles or ideas relative to the accomplishment of the learning objectives proposed above. A three-five page paper on "Journaled Lessons and Transformation in Community" is due before finals week. It will be a compilation of journaling done throughout the semester.
- 6) The student agrees to accept the role of the professor on site as that of overseeing and maintaining the unity of the house and helping to further personal and community growth.



**EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

1) Weekly Journaling (reviewed monthly)	25%
2) Life-in-Community assessment/reflection paper	25%
3) Attendance (80%) for study, prayer, community meals and service events	25%
4) Participation through synapse in Bonhoeffer and Nouwen readings	25%

**GRADING PROCEDURE:**

Pass/no pass basis.

**For discussion:**

- Where is learning space in community and service required so that students learn outcomes in keeping with response to God's call? We already spend a huge amount of money to get students into a service-learning environment (Spring and Summer) but couldn't we be more intentional in assessing this area?
- What are the institutional and practical difficulties of creating space for this kind of learning?
- How can using residence life in community be a more effective means of getting at goals in our Vision for Learning that we cannot touch in formal classroom settings?
- What are the philosophical barriers to this kind of accredited knowledge?
- What are the practical barriers?
- What if we took Zizioulas' description of the church and substituted NWC in its place? "The Church [read NWC] is not simply an institution. She is a 'mode of existence', a way of being. This way of being is not a moral attainment, something that man accomplishes. It is a way of relationship with the world, with other people and with God, an event of communion, and that is why it cannot be realized as the achievement of an individual but only as an ecclesial [learning community] fact."
- How might the objectives of the institution of NWC be affected if we started with idea that our education is primarily a "way of being" that begins with "trust, love and worship of God"?
- How might the objectives of trustees, college wide task forces, departments, classes or student organizations change if, for instance, in order to accomplish value #3 of our mission vision "connect knowledge and experience" we planned as if it was "unable to be achieved as individuals, but only as individuals in community"?
- Where on our campus does community-learning best happen and why?
- What do we fear most about trying to assess areas like trust, love and worship of God or response to God's call?
- Administratively, what are the objections or difficulties in working out institutional assessment for these areas?
- How could we retain standards of academic and cognitive excellence while extending our assessment to will or volition, love (affective) and worshipful service (action associated with intellectual and volitional commitment)?



## Service Learning as Space for Trinitarian Reflection toward Integration of Trust, Love and Worship in Community to Other Human Community

Service-learning through a governmental and educational act in 1990 is defined as follows:

a method under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community; is coordinated with an institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and helps foster civic responsibility; and that is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.<sup>18</sup>

Experiential Education seems to be the larger term that encompasses service learning, defined as, learning through reflection on doing, which is often contrasted with rote or didactic learning. Experiential learning is related to, but not synonymous with, experiential education, action learning, adventure learning, free choice learning, cooperative learning, and service learning. While there are relationships and connections between all these theories of education . . . they are also separate terms with separate meanings.

David Kolb states that learners gain a fuller knowledge through engagement with context, in personal reflection/evaluation, as long as the following characteristics of learning are in place:

- The learner must be willing to be actively involved in the experience;
- the learner must be able to reflect on the experience;
- the learner must possess and use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience; and
- The learner must possess decision making and problem solving skills in order to use the new ideas gained from the experience. (Kolb as cited by Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007)

The point here is not to define all the types but to note that in experiential learning, the individual learning experience is primary. In a Trinitarian and Incarnational model, the community and the individual are working in synergy but in such a way that common unity, under pathos of compassion and agape love is the ultimate goal (telos) of individual learning and expression. Service learning seems to fit better into a theological model of integrated learning.

Experiential learning is most easily compared with academic learning, the process of acquiring information through the study of a subject without the necessity for direct experience. While the dimensions of experiential learning are analysis, initiative, and immersion, the dimensions of academic learning are constructive learning and reproductive learning. Though both methods aim at instilling new knowledge in the learner, academic learning does so through more abstract, classroom based techniques, whereas experiential learning actively involves the learner in a concrete experience (Stavenga de Jong, Wierstra, & Hermanussen, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> See Education Act 1990, Service Learning.



From a Trinitarian and Incarnational perspective, service-learning and missional events have numerous contributions to make that are beyond what can be made in the traditional classroom setting. One we might ponder is the relationship between the Vella highlights of the relation of the learning community to the larger society. In service learning focused on serving others, there is more than an abstracted or hypothetical commitment to outcomes (as may be used often in classroom setting of problem solving or role play where the subject is not really a participatory subject. In missional service events, of which my wife and I have been a part while at NWC, the decisions made are personal and affect outcomes and group safety. When a community is engaged in real learning task,

The group itself becomes the subject, making decisions with the good of all in mind. These personal concessions are not easy. Often there are painful contradictions between the decisions of the individual and the needs of the group. As a microcosm, the adult learning situation mirrors this larger societal phenomenon: individuals making concessions for the learning of the group.

Such learning reflects much of what Paul highlights in Philippians 2:1-13 and more directly in Romans 12:3-5, the need for engaging learning as subjects, with a humility that is able to see and include the others as a major part of their attitude and then give up rights, often sacrificially, in order to serve the larger group.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others (Romans 12:3-5).

The group becomes the context for cognitive awareness to experience and grow into attitudinal, emotive and actionable relationships with others, all coming out of serious and faith-based critical reflection on how we are ontologically joined “in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (v. 5). Following this logic through, of belonging to Christ as a defining motif in how we attitudinally and volitionally relate to others, God is speaking growth into our lives by calling us to recognize our communitarian ontological position with others in the body of Christ so that we can grow in our full humanity. This long section in Romans 12:1-15:13 moves from the position and declaration of which we (and all others) are by God’s mercies (chapters 1-11) to how we are transformed by indwelling that grace which is now operational for us in Christ. The point is that growth is linked directly to seeing our position as one among many and that our ultimate calling is identical to that of Christ’s purpose and call, seen at the close of this section, Romans 15:5ff,

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written:

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;  
I will sing hymns to your name."



Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people"  
and again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
And sing praises to him, all you peoples (Romans 15: 5-20).

This theme of initial awareness and placement in Christ moving through community-based-relationships of learning in service to others is reiterated throughout Paul's letters, where relational categories are the means by which we "grow up" into a fullness of human expression. For instance in Ephesians 4:1-6:9, this growth is seen as a function of practical "truthoring" or being out of a Trinitarian and Incarnational position (John Stott's (1979) rendering of "speaking the truth") Notice well that the Trinitarian action leads to a call for unity "one Spirit . . . one Lord . . . one God and Father . . ." (vs. 4-7) and the resulting action of Christ, out of this Trinitarian unity, are gifts of grace and service that "we may attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (vs. 13). What brings this about is the same emphasis as in Philippians 2:1-13, not stopping with the life of the mind, but letting the old individual "self life" be renewed as we put on Christ. This is not a call to quit reasoning! But rather, to reason in and through the act of Christ for us, backed by the fullness of divine Trinitarian community, which we are to learn in humility of mind—that there is to be a communitarian renewing in the unity of love and the bond of peace. Individuality is not our full humanity; the fullness of Christ, inclusive of all nations, the fully human person, is our new identity.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Eph. 4:15-16).

The similarities to how transformation toward true growth in unity occurs are marked by the same pathways of learning in Romans 12:1ff and Philippians 2:1ff; that we are to have the mind or attitude of Christ so that we experience the ontological truth of being one in purpose. Attitudes of humility, love, patience and compassion are part and parcel of formation in true knowing resulting in unity that reflects Trinitarian oneness. Diversity contributes to unity as each person operates in self-giving love in regard to the other members for a common goal. Whether God creates or redeems, the actions are portrayed as a unity where diversity serves a common and larger goal (Gen. 1:1-3, 26-27; Eph. 1:3-14). The image of personhood cannot be full, in the sense of *imago dei*, without our participation in divine/human community.

### Further Study and Planning:

Beers (2008) offers an Assessment Planning Model starting with the largest area "Mission" and working through "Objectives, Outcomes, Measures, Bench-Marking, Feedback and Improvement," asking open-ended questions at each of these levels of implementation of "Institution, Major/Department, Course, Program" (p. 94). While Trinitarian reflection is not included, it could easily work in as an open-ended question.

Luther said the Trinity is the sum of the Gospel. Is communion in such divine/human community a defining mark of what we would define as a truly educated person? What does the telos of NWC education look like? In the words of Ruth George, "It looks a lot like a body."



## T-2. How Does Scripture Inform Worldview?

### V-2. Especially but not Exclusively, Engage Ideas

How might the way we teach about the Bible—its larger informing story or narrative—impact our students' worldviews and subsequently, their understanding of vocation? ...Especially in relation to how we "engage ideas."

#### The Bible; Literally, "The Book" — How do we Read it?

Lesslie Newbigin (2005) frames the question through the inquiry of a Hindu friend,

I can't understand why you missionaries present the Bible to us in India as a book of religion. It is not a book of religion—and anyway we have plenty of books of religion in India. We don't need any more! I find in [the](#) Bible a unique interpretation of universal history, the history of the whole creation and the history of the human race, and therefore a unique interpretation of the human person as a responsible actor in history. That is unique. There is nothing else in the whole religious literature of the world to put alongside it (p. 4).

Can we hear God's Word addressing us when He asks the expert in the law, ""How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26)

To say our reading is influenced by our culture and context is pretty evident—but how is our answer framed in relation to our NWC students and the learning goals in our mission/vision statement? Specifically, can we begin with an overarching theme in mind, such as God's sovereign design in history? Does this meta-narrative come out of the Scripture as we read? How do we use our vision and goals as a purposeful guide in forming students that learn to read and interpret Scripture well?

It would seem that in the larger perspective, if what the Hindu observer noted is true, then the Bible can become a wonderful lens through which we place the largest questions about life in proper perspective. But, if misread, it could become a terrible distorter and a great hindrance. Jesus said as much in Matthew chapter 23 when he railed on those who held the key to insights (Scripture) but misread and misapplied these to their own (and their students') peril.

For this section, I will rely heavily on Lesslie Newbigin's (1995b) analyses of the larger themes that relate to how we read both Scripture and our present context. He asks many pertinent questions and I've reframed one in particular that can be applied to our context: "What kind of confidence is proper for those of us in Christian Higher Education so that we may equip students to live in faith while 'equipped with the critical faculty that can distinguish sense from nonsense and reality from illusion?'" (p. 2).

#### Reading the Bible as the Story of Who We Are & Who God Is

In *A Walk Through the Bible*, Newbigin (2005) identifies three things about the story or interpretation of "the whole story of human history from creation to its end. . ."

- "The Bible has a hero and that is God." History is interpreted through the promises, actions and doing of God so that "we come to know God . . . by knowing his story" (p. 4).



- The Bible tells the story of the human race in terms of a particular story of one race . . . of one person within that race—Jesus of Nazareth. . . the story of all nations is in the background but not the center . . . God makes himself known in the context of our shared life . . . and specifically through the people he chose to be the bearers of his purpose.
- To be the chosen people, to be the place where God is made known in history, is to be chosen “for suffering, for agony and for conflict—and that is the story the Bible tells” (pp. 5-6). Elsewhere Newbigin says that “ultimate reality was no longer unknowable: it was available to us in the person of Jesus Christ” (1995b, p. 7).

Jesus' answer to the inquirer in Luke 10:25ff (Good Samaritan parable) encompasses a grounding in the love of God and neighbor. His words are also prefaced by the reminder that “seeing” is not automatic, “many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.” Yet, getting this truth internalized is a result of action—and results in a state of human well-being, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.”

Finally, the knowledge of love is tied to an indwelling of such, in our context, with that terribly present reality of the one he calls “our neighbor.” Not just knowing them from afar or speaking at them, but having specific mercy in serving this one called neighbor, all seekers of this manner are implored to “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37).

### Worldview: Competing Truth Claims and Dualism

For Newbigin (1995b) as well as early church fathers and a host of other truth-seekers, dualism is a theme that seems to captivate and affect much of the history of worldview. How we sort and frame reality through what is presented to our senses is crucial to the task of learning and **to** our mission/vision statement.

Much of the discussion of analysts like Thomas John Hastings (1995) of Tokyo Union Seminary also deals with various forms of dualism, so we turn to a general overview of how dualism may affect our context and the question of our reading of Scripture.

At the heart of the Christian message was a new fact: God had acted—and let us remember the original meaning of “fact” as the Latin *factum*, “something done.” God had acted in a way that, if believed, must henceforth determine all our ways of thinking. . . According to Athanasius, it provided a new *arche*, a new starting point for all human understanding of the world.<sup>19</sup> It could not form part of any worldview except one of which it was the basis—but at the same time it could only be communicated to the world of classical thought by using the language of classical thought (p. 4).

Newbigin (1995b) cites the choice of *logos* in the Fourth Gospel as a word originally referring in Mediterranean Greek culture “to the ultimate impersonal entity which was at the heart of all coherence in the cosmos. (An Indian analogy would be the word *dharma*.)” But as Gospel message is identified in and through *logos* in Christian word and community, the very meaning changes and the whole “edifice of thought . . . has to be taken down and rebuilt on this new foundation, this new *arche*” (p. 5).

<sup>19</sup> Philosophical method, ancient Greek philosophy, [from Greek *archein*, to start; hence *archê* the starting-point or beginning, first principle or origin] (“Arche,” <http://www.blackwellreference.com>)



Dualism can occur in various ways: in secular versus religious knowledge; between material and spiritual; between sensible and intelligible; or between a Christ of faith and a real Jesus. Athanasius struggled to affirm that Christ was, in fact, the very Being of God and could not be placed into a system as merely one of many players. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) ordered his ways of thinking by credo ut intelligam (I believe in order to know), and “he defined a way of knowing that begins with the faithful acceptance of the given fact that God revealed himself in Christ” (Newbigin, 1995b, p. 9).

NWC remains firmly within a Christian tradition only by an ongoing conversation that engages that position in the current context. I sense how easily one can drift toward a contextual dualism where we distance ourselves from knowing Biblical material and about the Person of Christ in a way that invites us into its larger story. “We can discuss an absent person in a manner that leaves us in full control of the discussion. But if the person comes into the room, we must either break off the discussion or change into a different mode of talking” (Newbigin, 1995b, p. 11). Similarly, we can treat the Bible as if there is no Person addressing us in the reading. In terms of vocation, we can make choices out of pragmatism, fear or materialistic orientations that ignore the reality of a God who is truly present for us through the Gospel.

How easy it is in a pluralistic smorgasbord of particular cultural truth claims for us to succumb to demoting the Gospel from a position where it defines the parameters of all philosophies to a competing mode with other religious systems. This can happen ideologically as Newbigin points out in another work. It is subtle and powerfully convincing, for it uses the very categories Jesus sets up as indicative of a right way of “reading” Scripture. The difference occurs when one removes the personal knowing of mercy, justice or love from being mediated through Christ, creating a paradigm wherein we directly control and define these fine sounding ideals by our methods. The fact is that the larger Story reminds us we are lost without a clarifying and directional beacon for human reason, namely dialogue with revelation in the Spirit of Christ. Bonhoeffer (1978) reminds us that it is not only on an ideological level that our need is apparent, but says that in Christ all of our relationships, with persons, ideas or things, are to be mediated.

### La Nausee – A Student’s Experience

A third year Philosophy major reading *Nausea* by Jean-Paul Sartre, in a Christian liberal arts setting, has related how he identified with the major character in the work. As this character is led on a path of deconstruction, typified by parallel forces and painful dichotomies, this student was never provided in class with an understanding, through critical reflection on the larger story, of how to avoid the trap the main character was leading him toward. This stand-off, where faith was effectively check-mated for years, could have been an opportunity for a deeper and richer integration of faith. Instead it was, in his words, like “watching someone in cardiac arrest and not knowing the story of how the defibrillator hanging on the wall, or CPR, works.” The student doesn’t remember working through the integration of faith and learning with the class. Rather, the professor trusted in the intellect and insights of the students—an assumption that integration happens without intentionality on the part of the professor. Is this a good way to go about learning in our context? Sometimes it is necessary to let the dissonance work on us and push our learning . . . but sometimes it can be too much.

In any case, it was the student’s relative, a theologian and philosopher who, outside of class and months later, pulled him out of a vacuous sense of hopelessness in losing sight of a larger Story-Teller. Such reflection can remind us of the need for clarity through Trinitarian and Christological aspects of knowing



as we engage ideas with students and as we create intentional learning spaces to do the same. Or, as we respond to students with sensitivity and insight into the struggles some positions may create.

### Worldview: Replacing Competitive Dualism with Relational Shalom

"In dualism the central issue is order. Two competing parties create a fundamental danger of chaos. Only as order is established can we speak of building a just society" (Hiebert, 1994, pp. 205-206). The Indo-European fabric of cosmic spiritual battle between good and evil forces, co-existing from eternity, creates a non-resolvable dualistic competition where humans are caught in between. Such a worldview affects thought, structures of society and education—all actions (Just ask The Matrix or Transformers!). I'm not saying that we mustn't encounter chaos or that it cannot be used in education, only that God does have a creative word to speak over the *tohu vabohu*<sup>20</sup> of student confusion.

Paul Hiebert (1994) notes that the Biblical view is non-dualistic, although the metaphors are of battle and struggle for peace—winning isn't everything. God is over the outcome and "the central issue in Biblical warfare is not power but faithfulness." Humans have responsibility through Christ for bringing in shalom ("right relationship with God involving worship, holiness and obedience"); prayer is not a means to control the gods but to submit and give God "permission to use us and our resources to answer our prayer" (p. 208).

Right relationships are not competition but expressions of love and care for those made in the image of God. Reconciliation, love and justice are tied to God's person, not to the immediate apparent and oft-seeming "dualist" struggle of living between good and evil. Shalom is not victory, but the final goal and the outcome is now determined in each of us in and through the victory of Christ on the cross. Our understanding of a gospel shalom, used as a lens through which to see the world is the crucial component of a justice-seeking, biblical worldview (Hiebert, 1994, pp. 209-212).

"If the Gospel is the good news of the reign of God over the whole of life, public no less than private; if the Church is therefore called to address the whole public life of the community as well as the personal lives of men and women in private and domestic affairs, what kind of leadership is needed?" (Newbigin, 1989, p. 236). How can we prepare ourselves to teach more effectively in the current cultural context?

### Practical Theology and Engaging Ideas

In the following section I will be summarizing numerous insights by Thomas John Hastings on why applied theological reflection in a Christian liberal arts context is particularly helpful. It can aid our navigation through what appears at times to be a non-resolvable dualism leading a stand-off between faith and learning.

The rationale for "why practical theology" is given by Loder,

In practical theology the disciplines that will help us understand human action must be put into a constructive relationship with the disciplines that enable us to understand who God is from God's self-disclosure. The systematic task of practical theology, then, is to preserve the integrity of such disciplines and . . . relate them so as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in question than any one such

<sup>20</sup> Hebrew for something like formless and void in Gen 1:2



discipline may be able to provide by itself. At the same time, such a relation should enrich both sides of this interdisciplinary endeavor (Loder as cited in Hastings 2007, p. 1).

Dualism can be entrenched in structures through paradigms that entertain false premises. Our national heritage where we work so hard to keep religion out of political structures can result in a misinterpretation that it is not right to use the Gospel as a lens through which to analyze and critique all structures. The Gospel is “public knowledge” and as Sanneh and others have noted, this message must be translated into life through the hermeneutic of the faith-community, living out Gospel in a particular setting. “To accept this [kind of] dichotomy between the private and public worlds is . . . a surrender the early church refused to make—at the cost of the blood of countless martyrs” (Newbigin, 1986, p. 12).

Luther, Calvin, Barth, Brunner and Bonhoeffer among others, sought to bring the effects of revelation and faith into reforming relationships with the structures of society—social, political and educational philosophies and structures. The reforming effect was as helpful to transformation toward being fully alive as humans in community as it was faithful to the translation of Trinitarian and Christological revelation.

### How Do We Embrace New Inquiry?

Hastings<sup>21</sup> (2007) examines James E. Loder’s<sup>22</sup> transformational model that “seriously wrestles with theology and epistemology.” He avoids the debates about the “relative priority of *theoria* or *praxis*” that do not arrive at real theological reflection. Going beyond the “how to issues of application,” Loder focuses on the “why” and “what for” questions and reflects the “conviction that all proposals in this field [practical theology] must be constructed and evaluated in intentional conversation with both the divine and human realities upon which they claim to reflect, paradigmatically present in the “ultimate paradox of the union of divine and human being and action in the person of Jesus Christ” (pp. 12-13).

This approach is a major and necessary paradigmatic shift from *a priori* reasoning based on the methods of a field<sup>23</sup> to *a posteriori* theological, missional and practical reflection<sup>24</sup> that recognizes, in advance, the “incongruent and qualitatively distinct realities” present in a setting such as ours.

### A Christ for Education that is 100% Human and 100% Divine

In our NWC context, the necessary and creative tensions between the categories of liberal arts and Gospel are not served well by imposing either/or solutions from one field of reality on to another (metaphysical/physical in theology imposed on the physical field science for instance, or vice versa). Rather, our areas of faith and learning respond best, according to Loder and Hastings in “an asymmetrical bipolar unity that is analogous to the formulations of the Council of Chalcedon” (Hastings, p. 14). In other words, just as Christ is both “fully human” and “fully divine,” so too must “faith” and

<sup>21</sup> Princeton Hastings is professor of practical theology at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. Richard Osmer of says “Hastings’ book offers a truly global perspective on practical theology and Christian education.” The book is based on his doctoral dissertation (Princeton 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Dr James Loder was his advisor at Princeton who died suddenly in November of 2001 before his dissertation was completed.

<sup>23</sup> Reasoning characterized by the explorations of a field through assumptions leading to a reasonable thesis statement to be explored.

<sup>24</sup> Essentially inductive reasoning as well as reasoning from observed facts



“learning” co-exist in a cooperative tension. As revelation informs parameters of reason through a faithful understanding of our telos or purpose— “I believe in order to understand.”

Faith does not substitute for hard work and study to understand a mathematical equation and its answer but rather, it becomes an ethos for the way we order and employ our learning in our vocare and field.

Torrance (as noted in Hastings, 2007) and Zizioulas (1985) claim that it was the early church’s theological reflection on the incarnation and Trinitarian doctrines (including creation ex nihilo) that provided what would be termed a “paradigm shift” facilitating reasonable, rational and empirical investigation of the universe. The resistance of the church to new ways of seeing is well documented in history. What is less well understood is that this reticence to move forward is a cultural, religious or “Christian” one—not one arising from Gospel as Good News. The conflation of church and Christianity with Gospel is all too common and binds both church and academe to unresolvable and unreasonable positions.<sup>25</sup> The Gospel as Good News liberates both academe and church to their full expression of truth expression, in community, for that is the nature of the God of Gospel.

What I have found in surveying students as to how Christ is presented today in their home churches most acknowledge that he seems to be preached as 60-70% divine and 40-30% human. Methods within the academe often exclude Christ from “factual” status or they denature his divinity through the imposition of a higher (sic) critical method. Neither do justice to revelation or to the formation of people in his image, as part of larger community (Romans 8:28-29).

And Zizioulas carefully reminds us that it was the pastoral theologians, those serving among God’s people, who finally freed the church culture from a dualistic and Gnostic captivity. They also explained in apologetic fashion divinization as “being” – both a fully human and fully divine in Christ and through Christ-among-us.

At its core, the theological weight of the reality came home that “in the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ, actual knowledge of God has once and for all been communicated within the epistemic limits of the human experience” (Zizioulas, p. 16). Realizing anew the effects of Gospel through rightly ordering our epistemic categories under a larger informing and teleological Biblical narrative, allows us to see “church” as the chosen steward and elected announcer, modeling what Newbigin terms as necessary “public knowledge” not separating the ecclesia off as a religious institution separated from real human community, but one that is meant to be a light and city as what John Stott (1979) calls “a new society.” Such a telos or ultimate purpose carries our mission/vision statement and keeps us from getting caught unwittingly in what may seem like dualistic tensions in faith and learning.

The Church is not simply an institution. She is a “mode of existence” a way of being. . .  
This way of being is not a moral attainment, something that man accomplishes. It is a way of relationship with the world, with other people and with God, an event of

<sup>25</sup> Briefly, Gospel is what God has done for us in Christ; religion, church and Christianity are responses to God’s grace and however wonderful or poor they may be, are in a different category than Gospel. In the same way, Scriptural revelation should not be placed in an equal relationship to theology, Scriptural authority means God speaks to us in Scripture. Theological authority means faithfulness to interpret and translate Scripture in a cultural and linguistic context.



communion, and that is why it cannot be realized as the achievement if an individual but only as an ecclesial fact (Zizioulas, 1985, p. 15).

How important are right relationships, rightly informed by truth, where knowledge of God with others and in the company of others experientially opens us to rightly applying insights from our respective fields. We may easily confess a non-dualistic view on Sunday in worship and then practically be shoved back into it on Monday as we encounter the reigning paradigms and structures of the world's systems—ones that influence greatly the structures Christians seek to form. Here is where the battle often becomes more apparent.

This way of being offered in a Trinitarian perspective, contrasts, perhaps more than we realize, with a modernist approach that seeks to bypass revelation and reflection on Christ and get to knowledge and its application directly. Yet Scripture affirms that our pursuit of knowing must run through Christ, "in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3).

I say more than we realize because the "fish does not know what wet is." Swimming, as we do in our educational culture and immersed largely, as we cannot avoid, in constructed paradigms of "knowing" from our disciplines, we may not even acknowledge as reasonable the integration of "learning" or "knowledge" against the backdrop of Trinitarian or Chalcedonian<sup>26</sup> facts.

### A Need to Clarify the Role of Revelation in View of Our Practice

How does revelation fit into categories called "fact" in the academe? How do we or should we best order our curricular and campus-wide structures so that we translate our confessions into actionable learning and assessment? If we do not know how this works then I suggest we could easily be carried in a cultural movement toward minimizing space for revelation of the Word informing our practices. "Not to decide is to decide." It is also naïve to think that any culture (or language with its metaphors and assumed paradigms) is neutral. Such beliefs leave us open to unrecognized cultural paradigms that locate Christian education "trapped within the fallacies of socio-cultural relativism and linguistic nominalism" (Torrance as cited in Hastings, 2007, p. 16).

### Homousia

While we may not think to apply the insights of this Christological and Trinitarian question of "being one substance" to education, it can help us accept the various contributions of our departments to the substance of Christian education, across our fields of knowing. That is, the substance of knowing the incarnate Christ is based on response to facts just as other fields are. While different fields divulge different forms of knowing, the substance of all knowing is set within the larger story of God's purpose. All truth and love then originate and find full meaning in God and for his purpose.

<sup>26</sup> In 451 a council of theological leaders met, affirmed at Chalcedon in Asia minor, what the earlier church was already teaching about the substance of Christ being the same as that of the Father. This council ruled against Arius and his affirmation of a different and created substance for the Son, which would have brought dualism into the Trinity.



Accepting the “one substance with allowed differentiation of persons” of the homoousion<sup>27</sup> dispels the false notion of mixing world with God or cosmology with God. Such mixing results in a misapplication of the well-worn statement in academia, “All truth is God’s truth” (Holmes, 1977) and confuses the pursuit of truly knowing about our universe because it can remove faith, trust and love as essential to knowing all truth. According to Hastings (2007), “The intelligible order and freedom of creation is understood to be in contingent relationality to divine intelligibility and freedom” (p. 17). The Western world-view, according to Hiebert (1994), contains the “flaw of the excluded middle” where we miss the purpose of God in the real and mundane (pp. 189-201). The fields of knowing we occupy serve the unity of truth from the Godhead. Our human endeavors are not to compete but serve, as Christ’s incarnation is interpreted by leaders at the time of Chalcedon, “So the one who retained the form of God when he made humanity, was made man in the form of a servant. Each nature kept its proper character without loss; and just as the form of God does not take away the form of a servant, so the form of a servant does not detract from the form of God.” The work of practical theology is to bring this reality of truth into a consistency in structures, something we do well now at NWC, and always seek to do better.

### Occupying the Same (Consubstantial) Substantial Learning Space

Ultimately “the divine/human relationality which coheres perfectly in Jesus Christ alone functions as the ‘constitutive’ and ‘regulative’ ground for the analogy between natural science and theological science.” Each sphere is then invited and allowed to contribute, theoretically and structurally, in the same “space and time” as “bearers of contingent order or intelligibility in which all created realities share. Within that medium, natural science is concerned to explore the stratified structures of contingent existence and theological science inquires of God their Creator who reveals himself through them” (Hastings, p. 18).

#### For discussion:

- How can we translate such theological facts into practical expressions of unity in our learning at NWC through what is called “an asymmetrical bipolar unity that is analogous to the formulation of the Council of Chalcedon?”<sup>28</sup> [Wow, that is more than a mouthful—it’s an eternal life full of mouthfuls. Is the translation of this question part of the dialogue? (!)]
- What really does homoousia have to do with education at NWC, if anything? How would it be “translated?”

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### The Meaning is Revealed and Reformed in a Present and Ongoing Educational Dialogue

Meanings of words like homoousia are not fixed forever by historical definitions but have their life and meaning for us in the present translation in our particular context, read in light of their historical interpretation as witness. This means the word we share and reason between us produces faith and the ability to apply it in our context. A method can never take the place of an ongoing and worshipful interaction of Word and educational context—Christ is the mediator!

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<sup>27</sup> Homoousia is the 4<sup>th</sup> century theological affirmation that arose in response to Arian claims that Christ was different in origin and nature from the Father. The early Church affirmed his Oneness with the Father and hence the Trinity in the Nicene Creedal affirmations. Homoousian theology affirms homoousia.

<sup>28</sup> For more information see <http://www.piar.hu/councils/ecum04.htm#CANONS>



Barth reflects, as did Luther, on the inability of human reason, especially taken to the end form of some philosophical thought, to comprehend or defend homoousia, as well as the fact of deus crucifixus<sup>29</sup> — apart from letting God speak through Scripture as revelation, our mere minds do not want to go there

“It may be that even in its obvious frailty it was the necessary standard which necessarily had to be set up in the 4th century and which even to-day, as often before, has still to be kept aloft against the new Arians, not as the standard of a foolhardy speculative intuition of the Church, but as the standard of an unheard-of encounter which has overtaken the Church in Holy Scripture. . . . We are under no illusion as to the fact that we do not know what we are saying when we take this term upon our lips. But still less can we be under any illusion as to the fact that all the lines of our deliberations on the deity of Christ converge at the point where we must assent to the dogma that Jesus Christ is ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ, consubstantialis Patri (Barth, 2000, p 440).

We do not make the full understanding of any doctrine the litmus test of orthodoxy—but we continue to confess more than we understand. Faith is not the absolute, God is and faith without doubt is dead, or sadly sleeping. At the same time, doctrinal confession and reflection among us as a part of an ongoing dialogue on the integration of faith and learning informs other categories of knowing. The asymmetrical, bipolar relationship between faith and learning, in regard to Christ’s calling to enter and redeem clarifies the role of applying the Word in our context, e.g. doing theology. Healthy theological reflection does not threaten insights from natural sciences, or the arts, or the humanities—but it does place a perspectival quality over them and recognizes particular limits of one fields’ “knowing.” Each field has the tendency to create others after its own image and this would result in one way of knowing, imposing its limited methodology, unwittingly or intentionally, upon another. This puts methodology in its proper place among the whole learning community; it too needs redeeming and reforming through fresh encounters so that it remains contextual and serves the larger story of God’s transforming purpose for all humanity.

Homoousia has application to female/male relationships and roles as well, as Galatians 3:28 affirms our substantial unity without denying the differentiations of personhood in its lived expressions. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

In confessing what informs our learning, we affirm our freedom and our responsibility to a commitment to translate our educational philosophy and its practical expression into the context of a community entrusted with a faith tradition, as follows:

Northwestern College is a community rooted in Scripture and the confessions of Reformed theology and thus shaped by a robust integrative and transformative vision of the Triune God who creates, redeems and sustains. This theological background supports a framework within which students, staff and faculty of various Christian traditions take up the task of loving, understanding and serving the world whose Savior and Lord is Jesus Christ. We see the pursuit of liberal arts education as worship experienced in community and offered to the glory of God. Embracing this calling with a freedom that arises from confidence in God’s saving grace and sovereignty, we are committed to cultivating virtues of heart and mind that will enable us to live out our

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<sup>29</sup> Crucified God



shared vocation as participants in God's redemptive work. We respond to God's call to proclaim the message of the gospel, be stewards of creation, serve Christ in all persons, and bring all things under his lordship (A Vision for Learning, 2009, para. 1).

By so doing, we avoid pitting faith against learning or learning against faith. We also avoid confusing students by leaving the "deconstructed" and without a way to reconstruct the relationship between the insights of "liberal arts education" and those that are "distinctly Christian."

The asymmetrical bipolar relationship proposed by Loder and affirmed by Hastings, becomes a means of seeing and a lens through which we can perceive more clearly how to order our campus wide structures toward effecting a learning-in-community that accepts Anselm's "I believe [Scriptural revelation] in order to understand [who I am and how I am to relate to God, humanity and the created world]."

### How Might We Read (or Misread) the Bible at NWC?

Typical misreadings of the right – "The unacknowledged and arbitrary pick-and-mix selection of an implicit canon-within-the-canon is one such misreading that I find troubling."<sup>30</sup>

Typical misreadings of the Left – "Skin-deep-only appeal to contextual readings, as though by murmuring the magic word 'context' one is allowed to hold meaning and relevance of the text at arm's length" (Wright, 2006, p. 110).

"I agree that the word context is thrown around on this campus all too often, sometimes without regard to what it really means."<sup>31</sup>

"If God isn't interrupting or stopping what we do then God, since He is Sovereign, is in favor of such things."<sup>32</sup> This is a misapplication of sovereignty as if sovereignty has over-ridden the effects of the Fall.

Scripture can also be misread by reducing it to systems of knowledge instead of letting it be a lens through which we look at all of our world and a Word God speaks to us in the now. It is quite often misread merely as a devotional book. Indeed, Scripture can and should be used for devotion, but it is so much more than that. Scripture reveals to us the story of God. It is a story that continues today and in which we are now a part of. And it is a story that will continue until God finally and completely renews creation.

### Seeing Through the Larger Story

N.T Wright (2006) suggests a five-act play schema to begin to place Scripture in a larger perspective:

- Act 1- Genesis 1-2 as a prehistory
- Act 2- Genesis 3-11 as a history that sets the stage for the unfolding of God as the main actor in the human story, with all nations in view and God's universal concern evident
- Act 3 – Story of Israel that begins with Abraham as the particular bearer of blessing to all nations, on through Messiah to Israel (See Galatians 3 and Romans 4, 9-11)

<sup>30</sup> A student's comment

<sup>31</sup> A student's comment

<sup>32</sup> A student's comment



- Act 4 – Jesus Act- Gospel and the fulfillment of all stories in His Story
- Act 5 - The church, living in and telling the story as Scripture does toward the climax of Israel and the emergence of a new creation amidst all peoples and cultures (pp. 124-125)

N.T. Wright suggests a number of themes that translate the power of Christ in the Gospel and retain it in our approach to Scripture and how Scripture is read.

The relational way God acts through the gospel message to accomplish this end is regularly unleashed as we saw, through the combination of:

- the power of the Spirit,
- the written Word,
- in the context and history of Christian mission,
- seen in the larger narrative or story of the mission of God permeating and/or superintending our reading of “individualistic” scripture verses,
- practiced in the teaching, preaching, formation of disciples through application of the Word meeting world in specific situations,
- by normal people filled with the abnormal cruciform message of Gospel,
- which facilitates change unlike “law” does—one of the heart, spirit and life,
- toward the goal of faith working through love,
- for all nations (Wright, p. 116).

He also suggests five ways of reading Scripture<sup>33</sup> which I have summarized below:

### 1. Totally Contextual

- Words within verses within paragraphs within chapters within books within historical, canonical setting
- Recognizing Cultural conditioning of scripture and its message is appropriate (Gal. 4:4 as time fully come)
- Recognizing our present cultural context in reading Scripture, which does not lead us to question the divinity of Jesus OR justification by faith, but to understand them better
- Recognizing larger unity while accepting diversity in the parts (p. 129) – Like drinking beer, not sipping wine.<sup>34</sup> “Incarnational reading” – Bible reading church “discovers” application.

### 2. Liturgically Grounded

- Scripture needs to be read as if it has central position and not just to teach content.
- Scripture should be read as worship.
- Scripture should be seen as the key through which the living God transforms and directs our mission
- Scripture should show where “authority” of Scripture really stands out, speaking to the church.
- The entire story of scripture should be heard through the readings. We ought not to prune it down.
- Eucharist should include reading of Scripture.
- Scripture should not only be read to be preached upon.

<sup>33</sup> See pp 125-142 for more on these ideas, summarized here

<sup>34</sup> I think this must be a Lutheran analogy more so that a strictly Reformed one!



### 3. Privately Studied reading of Scripture

- Western individualism highlights private study as primary and liturgical as secondary (at best) resulting in Enlightenment driven fragmentation.
- Study together
- Read devotionally
- Read as a community in smaller groups which enrich the whole or larger community.

### 4. Reading refreshed by scholarship

- Reformers literal sense does not mean taking everything absolutely literally
- Discovering what writers meant, recognizing parable as parable and so forth
- Avoiding anecdotal reading so that the church is refreshed and energized to the task it is called into for the world [Gospel service].
- When new ways to look at Scripture are proposed there is an obligation to explain to the wider community how this insight builds up, rather than threatens, the life and mission of the church [as canonical community].
- The Rule of faith does not stifle scholarship but asks it to live within a “framework” and if a writer abandons that idea they are not simply “without framework” but inevitably in another—perhaps an ideology, scholarly guild or philosophy.
- Loyalty here means to work within a hermeneutic of trust (sign of the Gospel!!) rather than a hermeneutic of suspicion.

### 5. Reading of Scripture Taught by the Church's Accredited Leaders

Summarizing the various offices of Ephesians 4:11, Wright moves onto his traditional area, bishops mentioning that the authority of scripture is forgotten because it is not practiced by the leaders (Referring to all of Ephesians 1), noting it is particularly clear there how leaders are to implement this authority in specificity (following Paul’s example of doctrinal and practicable, prayerful solutions).

- A leader then is “one through whose work this mission comes about, enabled and directed by Spirit-based energy . . . unity and holiness is generated and sustained.”
- Organizing and managing leave a “vacuum” where there should be “life”
- Teaching and preaching remain at the heart of the church’s life, interwoven with sacramental life. Most churches have a long way to go in the teaching of scripture.
- The authority of church leaders cannot consist of “legal structures” primarily but as with the apostles, it must be the proclamation of “the word in the power of the Spirit.”
- He recommends Lightfoot and Wescott (Greek scholars/commentators).
- Decline in morality, resources, unity, failure to present the gospel should “drive us to pray for scripture to be given its head once more.”

### Discussion:

- How does the mission statement of the college presuppose a habitus of faith where liberal arts lives. The house is built according to God’s story and design, while the rooms are liberal arts and sciences?
- In what ways does Hastings model of asymmetrical bipolar relationships help some to clarify the philosophy behind our educational mission vision?



## Gospel

The four values of our mission vision must be clarified, seen, repeated, refracted and affirmed with a humble confidence for our students through a gospel in scripture lens. Scripture's word, ideas and concepts can be read as moralist, devotional, legal, allegorical and so forth depending on the hermeneutic we bring to it. Above all, we see Scripture rightly when applied through reflection on Christ as Gospel.

Lesslie Newbigin (1989):

The gospel is not the assertion that in Jesus certain qualities such as love and justice were present in an exemplary manner. If this was the case, we could dispense with the example once we had learned the lesson . . . The gospel is not just the illustration of an idea. It is the story of actions by which the human situation is irreversibly changed. The concreteness, the specificity, the "happenedness" of this can in no way be replaced by a series of abstract nouns. The difficulty of words like justice and love is that their content has to be given them in particular situations where action has to be taken. Both justice and love can be used and are frequently used as masks for special interests. One has to ask, "Whose justice? What kind of love?" Where there is no Judge, each of us is judge in our own cause. On the other hand, when we point to Jesus, and to the story that has its center in the cross, we are invoking a criterion by which all our claims to justice are humbled and relativized. To affirm the unique decisiveness of God's action in Jesus Christ is not arrogance; it is the enduring bulwark against the arrogance of every culture to be itself the criterion by which others are judged. The charge of arrogance which is leveled against those who speak of Jesus as unique LORD and Savior must be thrown back at those who assume that "modern historical consciousness" has disposed of that faith (p. 166).

### "How to" questions on integrating theology into aspects of NWC education:

- What particular evidence from the current context of Christian theology and mission would lead us to believe that we must have more of this sort of dialogue in forming our students?
- How and where, outside of prerequisites in theology or biblical studies, should theological and biblical interpretation inform our integration?
- How does theology seriously and practically inform our oversight and implementation of our mission/vision, our programming and our classes?

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## Misreading the Larger Story of Scripture as Pluralism

The case in point that follows comes largely from Lesslie Newbigin's concerns with what is called pluralism. Pluralism teaches Jesus is not unique. All religions lead to salvation. God's love or grace is interpreted as total tolerance. Grace then becomes a principle for acceptance of contradictions in truth claims, and so forth. This leads ultimately toward an unsustainable position because such a view affects multiple doctrines and relativizes Scripture itself, as simply one scripture among many. Such epistemological views are held by theologians such as Paul Knitter, Wilfred Cantwell Smith and J. A.T. Robinson, whom Knitter quotes in supporting the pluralist position.



Lesslie Newbigin and Paul Netland take the pluralist position to task, noting that it effectively denies our ability to make distinctive truth claims, effecting not only theology but the epistemological foundations we rely on as a college. It certainly clarifies our very present need for college-wide reflection and open, ongoing dialogue on worldviews within our various fields that must not contradict our Vision for Learning.

### Noncontradiction as an Epistemological Position

Harold Netland (1999) speaks of the epistemological problems with the pluralist position.

What is disturbing . . . [is that] some theologians and mission leaders now proclaim that reliance upon the principle of noncontradiction in religion is a mistake, and that Western (Greek) notions of truth as either/or and exclusive are unhelpful in religion. . . similarly Paul Knitter asserts that the understanding of truth as exclusive, as either/or, is highly problematic in the modern context, and that today we must recognize the “ongoing, pluralistic nature of truth” and must admit that “all religious experience and all religious language must be two-eyed, dipolar, a union of opposites.” The terminology used by Knitter is from the provocative book *Truth is Two-Eyed* by the late New Testament scholar and theologian, John A.T. Robinson (p. 143).

This view is specifically called, “unitive pluralism.” Netland’s assessment is that the way it is presented makes it extremely difficult to sort through the language, filled very generic metaphors of religious ideas. He does concede that if their “attacks on exclusive truth” are to establish a claim that all faiths should be willing “to listen and learn from others,” it is “an important one.” Yet he goes on to point out that they go far beyond appeals for listening and learning but rather reject any unique position for truth in Christ at logical and ontological levels (p. 145).

“Contradiction is the affirmation and denial of the same meaning. The price of rejecting the principle of non-contradiction is a forfeiture of the possibility of meaningful affirmation about anything at all—including any statement about the religious ultimate (p. 145).”<sup>35</sup>

Newbigin (1989) devotes a whole chapter in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* to critiquing this view “so widely held that it has become in effect the contemporary orthodoxy. Pluralism is the reigning assumption, and if one declines to accept it, as I do, one must give reasons” (p. 156). Here Newbigin shows himself to be evangelical, in the true sense of the word, that of Luther and the Reformers, because he will not compromise the Gospel, the euangelion, the evangel.

Paul Knitter and John Hick (2005) both edited *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*. Knitter has also written *No Other Name?* and in 2009, *Without Buddha I Wouldn’t be a Christian*. Newbigin notes it is also misreading of Scripture to not allow Christ the right to critique but only to affirm and accept. “The basic assumptions from which Paul Knitter and his colleagues write is, on the one hand, the urgent need for human unity, and on the other side a conviction that one religious tradition cannot provide the focus to that unity” and therefore this “modern historical consciousness must necessarily disallow Christian claims to uniqueness” (p. 156).

<sup>35</sup> Netland notes the classic treatment of noncontradiction is found in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 1005b, 15-1008a. Cf. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 1941 pp 736-743.



According to Newbigin (1989), Paul Knitter has made the point that since Einstein absolutes are abandoned and everything is relative (which is an overstatement to say the least). What does seem to control the pluralist epistemologies is a strong human pathos for unity coupled with answers provided in Eastern religions. This leads us back to forms of dualism the early fathers fought so hard to push back. Such a view is attractive today because of the desire for relationality, sometimes at any cost.

Actually, the notion of “two distinct levels of reality and truth is particularly characteristic of certain schools of Hinduism and Buddhism . . . relative truth is limited to the phenomenal world” with “absolute Truth” identified with an “undifferentiated Reality” (Netland, p. 147). This is a significant shift from knowing of truth through Christ and a Kingdom of God perspective to knowing truth through engagement with any human cultural context. The pluralist view is analogous to that presented in Hindu scripture, albeit under other names. The Mundaka Upanishad teaches, “There are two knowledges to be known—as indeed the knowers of Brahman are wont to say: a higher [para] and also a lower [apara]. This distinction is fundamental to Advaita Vedanta Hinduism” and the position of Shankara, its “outstanding philosopher” (p. 148).

The ordinary, or what is seen and known empirically, is maya or illusion. In such a view, one reaches an advanced spiritual level of insight so the spiritual person transcends categories of this or that, truth or false and all is One—the knower now becomes the reality and is one with this so-called higher Reality. It is a concern because of those who are making the claims and how their route simply bypasses the theology of our earliest Christian creeds and confessions.

As Netland points out in his concluding remarks “there are serious problems with each of the formulations” [that provide the basis for the claims made by Knitter and others in the pluralist camp]. “Any epistemologically acceptable theory of religious truth must recognize that beliefs are integral to religion and that truth in religion, just as in other domains, must include the notions of propositional and exclusive truth” (p. 150).

It is not only theology and Chalcedonian affirmations of the two natures, filling and indwelling one person that must defend against such an epistemology, but higher education as well. We confess in our Vision for Learning that we express true worship of God in studying and inquiring of the material world, one fallen and twisted at all levels by sin and yet very real. This world can be studied because it yet makes some sense and bears the marks of its Creator (Romans 1) with enough correspondence to truth for us to recognize God since it is made by a sensible God who is a relational Person. Our world is knowable in physical means, not apart from them. Knowing Gospel follows from recognizing corresponding truth in the “book” of Natural revelation and the metaphors it provides. Gospel truth, unique to Jesus Christ, can be understood as fulfilling the hopes and yearnings of a fallen creation (Romans 1, 8).

In another chapter of the book edited by Knitter there is the claim that “modern historical consciousness” requires us to abandon the claim to Christ’s uniqueness and to recognize that the biblical view of things, like all human views, is “culturally conditioned” (p. 5ff). “In the pluralist perspective . . . there are real and genuine differences within the Godhead itself, owing to the manifold involvement that God has undertaken with the great variety of human communities” (p. 212). Newbigin’s (1989) assessment is sobering: “the religious pluralism represented in The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions is evidence of cultural collapse . . . if ultimate reality is that he,



she or it behaves in mutually incoherent ways, what possible hope is there for human unity? The corollary of this intellectual collapse is the abandonment of hope for human unity" (p. 162). This is hardly a good representation of the Christian position!

Other writers in the pluralist paradigm who preceded Knitter, like Cantwell Smith, state the absurdity of believing that Jesus uniquely expresses God. Dr Diane Eck (as cited in Newbigin, 1989), Harvard Professor and Moderator of the World Council of Churches dialogue affirms as "preposterous that there should be only one incarnation, one gospel . . ." (p. 163). We could go on but the point is made.

If the Gospel, as revealed in Scripture, is the lens through which we see the world, our education and our vocare, then the need to clarify what is Gospel and what is religion; what is Gospel and what is Christianity; and what is truth through Scripture and what are erroneous and dangerous ideologies masquerading as Christian has never been greater.

What is ignored additionally in all the pluralism claims, is the doctrine of election, of God's choosing and honoring historical particularity so that God's universal love can be offered as good news for all. Such good news is not non-fact, non-historical myth—this is where we are led by the pluralist paradigms. The history of Abraham would have to be grossly misread or reconstructed to accommodate this high moral ground of all-inclusive and absolute pluralism!

Newbigin (1989) notes the movement toward absurdity in these claims, "The Myth . . . volume (Paul Knitter and John Hicks) celebrated a decisive [self-described] move beyond exclusivism, and beyond inclusivism which acknowledges the saving work of Christ beyond Christianity, to a pluralism which denies any uniqueness to Jesus Christ. . . a move from a Christocentric view of reality to a theocentric one . . . [to] sociocentric – . . . the common quest for salvation. . ." "it is a move away from a center outside the self, to the self [be in socio-self ultimately united with some Transcendent Reality of Self] to Self as the only center . . . it is a move which converts Christian theology from a concern with the reality of God's saving acts, to a concern with 'religious experience' . . . which converts theology to anthropology . . . "Reality is made the servant of self and its desires for a valueless salvation" (p. 169).

So the question of how we read the biblical story looms large as to whether we are given and entrusted through Scripture with a Gospel that is uniquely "the power of God to salvation to all who believe, the Jew first and also the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Newbigin (1989) would affirm and I would agree that the Christian reading of Scripture in its tradition "affirms that this salvation has been made possible because God the Creator and Sustainer of all that is, acted in the historical person of the man Jesus to meet us, take our burden of sin and death, invite us to trust and love him, and so to come to a life centered in God and not self" (p. 169).

N.T. Wright (2006) offers this understanding of the importance of a contextual reading, both ours and the writers'. "A fully Christian view of the Bible includes the idea of God's self-revelation but, by setting it in a larger context, transforms it. Precisely because the God who reveals Himself is the world's lover and judge, rather than its absentee landlord, that self-revelation is always to be understood within the category of God's mission to the world, God's saving sovereignty let loose through Jesus Christ and the Spirit and aimed at the healing and renewal of all creation" (p. 32).



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### For reflection or discussion:

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- How, specifically, do we view the Bible's authority?
- Can we see this through how we use the Bible in an intro class, or discussion?
- Luther said scripture was "the swaddling clothes that hold Christ"—discuss this.
- What might these mean as we try to distinguish Gospel as a unique and necessary category within the larger body of Scripture?<sup>36</sup>
- What is attractive about the vantage point from which a pluralist position makes all absolute claims of the various world religions relative?
- How might what Newbigin calls our "super-market culture" contribute to pluralism's case?
- How can we work together, institution-wide, to engage ideas in ways that bring freedom to our learning?
  - In ways that bring responsibility under our vision to our choices and actions?
  - In ways that bring the message that "God is unconditional relational love" to our ultimate sense of engaging the world in our vocation as God-calling?
- What kind of examples of reasoning in light of Gospel would we need to better understand "integration?"
- If a friend asked you, "So what really is the difference between Christian Liberal Arts education and Liberal Arts education?" how would you respond?

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<sup>36</sup> Luther's Commentary on Galatians



### T-3. How Does Incarnation Inform Service?

V-3, 4. Especially but not Exclusively, Connect Knowledge and Experience and Respond to God's Call

"How might a theology of the cross inform the way we value and integrate various aspects of the learning context, particularly connecting knowledge and experience as well as to respond to God's call?"

Beginning with a summary of important parts of Douglas John Hall's (2003) discussion of theology of the cross from his work *The Cross in Our Context*, we will branch into other authors and aspects of the discussion.

#### Theology of the Cross

In the setting of Christian Higher Education, a theology of the cross that cannot translate into a community of learning of the cross is a contradiction of incarnation.

What I believe to be the heart of incarnational theology shines forth from the wonderful "chair passage" of Pauline poetry where God-the-Son gives up rights and privilege to serve us (Phil. 2:1-13). Here too is a vocational call for those in Christ to make volitional and bodily response, and indwell, with self-emptying, our own context. In this we see the concise outlines of an unmistakable *theologia crucis*, or theology of the cross.

Hall (2003) calls this a "thin tradition" in theology and one we often misunderstand, overlook or just plain flee. It is not a theology that makes suffering its object—although suffering is part of its nature and consequences. It is not easily accepted as valid because of the difficulties it poses to a *theologia gloriae* or theology of glory that more easily carries the day for human endeavors, institutions, church order and just plain being successful as a bottom line. Such success however speaks triumphalism rather than gospel. Hall defines triumphalism as:

strongly held world-views, whether religious or secular, [that] present themselves as full and complete accounts of reality, leaving little if any room for debate or difference of opinion and expecting of their adherents unflinching belief and loyalty—at least in its own estimate—over all ignorance, uncertainty, doubt, and incompleteness, as well as, of course, over every other point of view (p. 17).

Depending on our worldview, we may flee a *theologia crucis* because it does not allow us to remain aloof, detached and objective-observers but beckons us to knowing-as-being-and-doing as we stand within its real Person of pathos, identified both historically and symbolically with its cruciform Author. Institutional or politicizing groups may flee because such theology of the cross encourages faith communities "to permit doubt and self-criticism to play a vital role in the life of faith."

It belongs to religious and political triumphalism to ascribe its fundamental tenets directly and in non-mediated fashion to God or some ultimate and obvious knowing that humans can have directly (supposedly) rather than through an ongoing encounter of the Word of God in the community of faith (Hall, p. 18). So as weak and dubious as it may seem, the structural antidote to Christian Education that is Christian in this Christ-centered sense, is one of constantly submitting to conversation, to dialogue, to doubt and to difficult questions, in the Holy Spirit, for this is part and parcel of how God deals with fallen



humanity to reform them. A difficult yet loving and transformative learning-task of “Where are you?” is the first post-fall question posed of now naked and struggling humanity (Gen. 3:9 ff).

“While Luther invented the language of theologia crucis, he did not invent the thought behind the language, which is chiefly biblical” (Hall, p. 14). Hall encourages us to familiarize ourselves with the significance of this tradition which Moltmann (1993) says has had “a good deal of support . . . but was never much loved” (p. 3). Perhaps this is largely due to its “genesis in a great refusal” (Hall, p. 16). Other theologians like Chemnitz, Barth, Brunner, Bonhoeffer, Forde, Ebeling, C. S. Lewis, Alan E. Lewis, Martin Luther King Jr. and Hall have given this theology shape. Theologians previous to Luther contributed to its expression, as Hall notes, as a via negativa (Nicholas of Cusa and Augustine) or describing what something is not.

Yet even as we speak of this great refusal, Hall cautions us not to place Luther in a camp of postmodern relativism where truth simply “moves over” for relational knowing. Neither was he an individualist in the Western sense—yet he was frustratingly honest.

### Faith as Relational “Trust” vs. Assent to Doctrine

There is a very important concept that specifically responds to the question of the value of a theology of the cross for our present context, one we could discuss together. It is written as “trust” in our mission/vision statement. We could ask: What do we mean by it? How is it formed in us as a Christian educational institution? How is it measured? To what parts of campus might we look to partner for its nurture?

Two aspects of trust relate to the two ways of knowing we have explored in this paper, both as necessary as they are nuanced. Luther sought to find the expression of Gospel clarified in the minds of Christian educators of his day by avoiding the “transmutation of faith as trust (fiducia) into faith as assent to doctrinal [or ideological/political] propositions (assensus)” (Hall, p. 19). This can occur all too easily through the ways of knowing common to the academe. The confusion in learning created by a system that tries in one sense to make Christian truths real and “learned” can err in misunderstanding the process or method appropriate to trusting in a loving and relational “questioning Presence” rather than assenting or agreeing to knowledge about what is called objective truths. While such a view of faith may be uncomfortably unwieldy as a quantifiable educational outcome, it is very much in the ethos of our mission, including giving the confidence and space that students need to truly “engage ideas” through open questioning. But not so open that we make the Biblical writers and the historical theologians who study them into those who relativize or bypass the Word of God in the process!

Fiducia draws us into the learning sentence by offering a subjective knowing of God as Father in a personal-trust created by God’s action of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). It relates to our mission/vision for forming whole students precisely because it places the ultimate goal of our learning in the Person of a God who makes Himself small enough so that we can question Him as He questions us; He welcomes dialogue!

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:29-30).



One may note the extended dialogue of Job as well as portions of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk, not to mention Jesus' constant insistence that the Pharisees should learn the meaning of trust, love and worship, engage ideas, connect real knowledge with real experience and truly respond to God's call, not merely that of their field or tradition.

Vella and Palmer remind us of the importance of a "safe educational space" where "trust" is a major prerequisite for true engagement with ideas, self, and others—and therefore, true learning. In this sense our primary affirmation about a theology of the cross is that it provides a background and context where questions are welcomed by a loving and relational God who is specifically known this way through a faith (fiducia) in a Christ who "suffers with us and has compassion (com-with; passion-suffering). The presentation methods then as to how we know about this God and ultimately know God-in-Christ includes pathos, not merely knowing from afar. He in fact defines this knowing and limits Himself in His will in Christ to enter and know us in "bearing" our griefs, sicknesses, sorrows, weaknesses, shame and inadequacies of knowing so that we may know Him!

As a "knower" he does not command only a stand-off-from afar-and-be-objective-approach as the sum of knowing but an enter-the-world-of-the-experience-of-the-life-you-are-studying-approach. Does God permit himself to be changed and transformed by the context? Yes, but not beyond his nature, which is loving, holy and so forth.<sup>37</sup> In the sense of his needing to be changed or being ultimately conditioned by our actions, no—nevertheless, He is responsive to us.

### Connecting "Knowledge" and "Experience"

So then the "faith" we are speaking of that is envisioned in the word "trust, love and worship" goal, is a faith that is primarily relational and secondarily doctrinal, in an "asymmetrical, bipolar relationship."

I believe more can be discussed on the way we teach about knowing God, about Scripture, especially about the emphases in required courses that introduce students to Scripture and in this, suggest ways of understanding that reflect methods or paradigms leading to ways of seeing Scripture.

Lesslie Newbigin (1989) and N.T. Wright (2006) both emphasize that students of Scripture should understand purpose—of both the writers of Scripture and the purpose or ultimate goal (telos) God seeks to speak through Scripture. This connects and orders the stories and doctrines of Scripture as we learn them.

Various biblical writings envision a relational engagement and identification with the subject as the telos of knowing. Trace the letter to the Ephesians from the doctrinal expanded toward the relational and experiential in the concepts and linguistic focus (gnosis to epignosis) and knowing doctrines (Eph. 1:3-14) to knowing them personified and personalized in Christ (vs. 15-23). A similar movement occurs in Philippians 2:1-13 where some knowledge and experience about God and his work for us / in us becomes fuller knowing in the invitation to enter an incarnational attitude by applying faith in actual experience in Christ—having his mind.

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<sup>37</sup> Examples from Christ's work while he was with his followers show that he allowed things to happen that he could have prevented in order that faith and love might develop in the disciples and others. This includes Lazarus dying, Peter getting dunked, the storm on the sea continuing to beyond comfort levels, the hunger of the crowds and the unrest while the loaves and fishes were emerging.



This connection of knowledge with experience is the invitation of Romans 12:1-3 that we might be “transformed” and at the same time “prove what is good, acceptable and perfect” by using the gifts given to serve in real contexts. In that sense, we apply in faith the incarnation through participation in the cross event in our context, a theologia crucis, and this brings knowing to a different level.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. . . (Romans 8:28-29a).

At the heart of this character of faith is a revealing and concealing and further revealing that is evident in Jesus’ frequently put open-learning questions or tasks “Who do people say that I am?” Who do you say that I am? What is the meaning of this saying? Go and learn what this means! Who is your neighbor? Whose image is on this coin?

The main point of a theology of the cross, drawn from reflection and dialogue on a historical incarnation/resurrection story that informs us by faith is “faith’s recognition of its terrible inadequacy and utter dependency when it comes to this center and core of its object, which is “no object but a living Subject” (Barth as cited in Hall, p. 119). It is this ongoing dialogue in community, in learning as an act of faith, with a God that is far from abstract, whose knowing is not contained in theories about deity or in affirmations of his being “omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, infinite, absolute, ultimate, prime mover, first cause, etc., etc.” (p. 120), that we in fact come most closely to approximate the image of our fully formed educated student. So then it is in a volitional and experiential faith engagement in a confessing community that allows being questioned by God’s Word and questioning God about the Word, with a real story of a unique individual, in our historical context, that keeps defying reduction to theory or abstraction and therefore leads us toward a right “trust, love and worship, engagement of ideas, connection of knowing with experience and response to God’s call.”

This focus on the incarnation, creating space for its relation to our learning and reflection, this theology of the cross is a corrective to the great tendency and historically-evidenced threat all through Christendom—the loss of Christ’s real humanity (p. 124).

As mentioned elsewhere, the Chalcedonian teaching of the two natures led the church to affirm the fullness of this Word to us, that “Jesus as the Christ” was “certainly a fully human being” and that “In and through his humanity faith knows itself to be met by the ultimate—by very God. The Gospels and the epistles of the New Testament maintain this in one way, largely under the form of the relational ontology . . . ” (Hall, p. 125). The emphasis on the nature of Jesus Christ as primarily divine, throughout the history of the church, may in fact be part of an attempt where we “know more than we can tell.” As such, we attempt to keep the relational symmetry in ultimately giving Glory to God, ultimately responding to God’s call, primarily focusing our education within a larger context where revelation trumps empiricism, but each inform the other. The telos of our knowing is to believe and know Christ, glorifying God in our pursuit within the tensions of Christian higher education, set against the full humanity that God has assumed and continues to redeem, through our engagement with the world of knowing as a participation, by faith, in the action and experience of Christ’s work now as our vocare.

I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to



present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:24-27).

### Service Learning & Vocare

The case for taking a theology of the cross “all the way to its conclusion” brings us to service learning or vocare—a logical step in light of the progressive and teleological nature of our mission statement. The idea of truly serving with our doctrinal and empirical knowledge is simply the outcome of fully formed personhood. Is this one thing that might truly distinguish Christian education from other forms of higher education? If we can accept the full process, with all its weaknesses and difficulties, perhaps. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a fully educated Christian should therefore:

plunge himself or herself into the life of a godless world, without attempting to gloss over its ungodliness with a veneer of religion or trying to transfigure it. He or she must live a “worldly” life and so participate in the suffering of God. . . To be a Christian [student] does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to cultivate some particular form of asceticism . . . but to be an [educated] human being. It is not some religious act [or institutional action] which makes a Christian what he or she is, but participation in the suffering of God in the life of the world (as cited in Hall, p. 175).

In this, our institution cannot make Christians, but can make space for fully formed undergraduates by making space for service learning and therefore better fulfillment of our educational calling in our mission and vision toward indwelling the calling of God as a vocare-shaped response to their time at NWC.

### Questions to ponder:

- What do we see as purpose statements in Scripture, and how do these correspond with and further define the NWC Vision for Learning: Learning Goal 4 that students “respond to God’s call?”
- How does the way that Biblical/Theological classes teach about faith as trust and faith as assent relate to the way students engage ideas about the Bible? ...Or how students respond to God’s call?
- How can credit be granted for areas that seek to teach service but cannot be assessed as other fields of study are?
- How might we assess pathos? Or, what learning environments provide real means of observing and reflecting on compassionate action on behalf of others and attitudinal changes in this area.
- What would it take to unite in partnership, service learning courses to already existing programs?



## Bonhoeffer: Community, Service & Response to God's Call

### Implementing Theology

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1978) presented his doctoral thesis at the age of twenty-one as a study of the communion of saints, defining this further in an inaugural dissertation entitled "Act and Being." He was part of the faculty at Union Theological Seminary in New York, became acquainted with the Niebuhrs and was captivated by the struggle and deep beauty portrayed in Negro Spirituals (p. 9). He highly admired Gandhi and had prepared to visit India through the mutual friendship of C.F. Andrews and the interests of pacifism. Before he could realize this dream he was called to take charge of a clandestine-confessing seminary deemed illegal by the Nazis. Here he lived with twenty-five young men studying to enter ministry and wrote *Gemeinsames Leben* (Life Together) and *Nachfolge* (The Cost of Discipleship). His emphases on the implementation of theology are deeply ingrained in all of his writing and his life.

In spite of his pacifism, as he weighed "the cost of discipleship, he concluded in the depths of his soul that to withdraw from. . . political and military resistance would be irresponsible cowardice and flight from reality. . . he could see no possibility of retreat into any sinless, righteous, pious refuge. The sin of respectable people reveals itself in flight from responsibility" (pp. 11-13).

He did not live to see the liberation of Germany but was hanged in Flossenbürg on April 9, 1945. The text he spoke on the night of his arrest was "With His stripes we are healed." Bonhoeffer was one who engaged full attention and gave his life for the integration of civic responsibility, through theological reflection, as an informed Christian calling.

In transferring knowledge of God to human beings, the Sovereign LORD has willed to be known in and through physical means. At the same time what makes this knowing specifically Christian is Jesus Christ and being "in Christ." Since God has predetermined that we know Him in this mediated way, the community of faith as his body is a necessary part of Christian knowing.

### On Christian Community Expressed through the Incarnated Life of Christ

Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it is a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means second that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity (Bonhoeffer, p. 21).

Because the Christian daily hungers for and needs the word of encouragement, hope, innocence and blessedness, God has placed this word for us in the faith and mouths of other members of our community. It is there that we need to look and to find a good word to us about God, because in ourselves we are discouraged, we see darkness and cannot rely on our own understanding alone. We realize that "the Christ in our own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of a brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure (p. 23).



Without this two-part way of knowing, ontologically in Christ and practically by fostering this interdependence of grace and hearing one another through Christ, “there is discord . . . The way is blocked by our own ego” (p. 23).

In all respects, individual, vocational, familial and educational, Christ took on our humanity and “our nature, ourselves. This was the counsel of the Triune God.” “Now we are in Him. Where he is there we are too. . . Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ” (p. 24). This means that our community is founded on forgiveness, received and therefore able, in Christ, to be given. This is how we meet one another, through what Christ has done for us. None of us should seek our ultimate community in personality, or discipline, or spirituality of one kind or another, or affinities and preferences. “I have community with others and shall continue to have it only through Jesus Christ” (p. 25).

### Freedom to Serve; Freedom to Trust, Love and Worship

To benefit from such action in our NWC community, the learning space would need to be voluntary and free so that the participants could operate in it by grace and not coercion. I believe students have shown they know this intuitively. In discussions on how to improve the Spring Service Projects for instance, even very conscientious students have resisted required components, saying it hinders what happens through the freedom or spontaneity of the group. Also, that required evaluation instruments might change the character of the experience or hinder students by making it more like a formal learning setting. Perhaps as we let this field of learning (service learning) tell us how best to explore and improve its relation to delivering on our mission/vision in the areas of “trust, love and worship” and “respond to God’s call” we must have a theological and philosophical precondition to the effect that such qualities cannot be nurtured by requirement but respond best where the individual and group are given complete freedom. Freedom is a precondition of fostering a gospel-based trust, love and worship response. If the response is not nurtured by grace through faith, it will not be authentic or beneficial.

The group addresses how the areas of “collaboration, common purpose [mission/vision] and controversy with civility can . . . accelerate positive change. Collaboration becomes the cornerstone of the group process by empowering others through trust” (Beers, 2008, p. 175). At the heart of what gives cohesion to the group is clear and communicated common purpose. “Common purpose means to work with shared vision and values.” The community circle is defined by the values particular to our distinctive Christian liberal arts calling in the reformed tradition.

Using these insights and beginning the first meeting of what might be renamed “Spring Service Learning/Projects” (SSLP) the freedom and responsibility of the learning task can be given to the group to design activities, follow-up and debrief to maximize the four learning outcomes we desire for graduates.



### Questions for discussion:

- What methods should leaders and educators use to facilitate learning in the areas of “trust, love and worship” or “response to God’s call” that would preserve the freedom (and perception of freedom) of the individual and the group while at the same time providing some instruments for measuring change so that we are responsible stewards of our mission/vision implementation?
- What other guidelines or preconditions would be necessary?
- Should the students take on the integration of this philosophy throughout the planning and structuring of the activities as a learning task from the beginning so that they are also part of the larger educational goals? In what ways does this happen already? If it is happening, how can it be improved?
- Would this hinder or help student learning?
- Are there areas of the campus community that could become more active participants in the outcomes of the larger NWC learning goals in the area of Spring Service Learning/Projects?
- Could we set up one pilot SSLP group to gauge student interest and generate feedback?

Bonhoeffer’s (1978) characteristically to-the-point affirmations remind us not to confuse our natural desires for a “devout heart for community” with the spiritual reality. Here is where community is “most often threatened” and “at greatest danger.” It is where Christians look for some extraordinary social experience and confound “some wishful idea of religious fellowship with divine reality” (pp. 26-27).

“Christian community is not an ideal, but a divine reality . . . it is not a psychological but a spiritual reality. For those who love a dream of Christian community more than the reality, they become destroyers of true community for God is . . . a God of truth” (p. 27). Those that set up Christian community on their own demands, their own law, and judge God’s community by such will act “adamant” and act “as if [they] are the [creators] of Christian community.” When things do not go well such persons will point and call Christian community a failure. So first they become “accusers of their brethren, then accusers of God” and finally the despairing accuser of self. For the Christian has no other true identity except in and through Christ as body, as community. This is the ideal and fully alive human toward which any transformational or formational process described as “Christian” moves; it is the telos of Christian community and cannot be subverted to another image (p. 29).

I find plenty of other areas to discuss in Bonhoeffer’s comparisons of human versus divine-human community and perhaps these could become talking points in discussions that reflect on the phenomena or group-character observed in our communities and how we could better foster formation of students in keeping with our calling.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See chapter 1 “Community” pp 17-39 for more explanation of these summations



Incarnational Community	Expressed Human Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Based on Word-revealed Person</li> <li>▪ Familial service to one another out of divine/human unity</li> <li>▪ Freedom ordered toward service with the cross and resurrection in view</li> <li>▪ Primarily for others, within and without the community</li> <li>▪ Christ-Person, servant-leader rules</li> <li>▪ God's Word as binding us</li> <li>▪ Power and influences Surrender to Christ</li> <li>▪ Agape transforming love as faith-gift of Christ guides method</li> <li>▪ Vulnerability as kindred</li> <li>▪ Willingness to suffer for kingdom goals in God's story</li> <li>▪ Mediated by Christ</li>   <li>▪ Whole person oneness, including spiritual aspects</li> <li>▪ Christ-relation for all, is all</li> <li>▪ Multiple Conversions to Christ</li>   <li>▪ Love of neighbor for Christ's sake and our neighbor's best good</li> <li>▪ Comprehends human love and subjugates human desire in the Spirit of Christ</li> <li>▪ Creates freedom to serve Christ/other</li>   <li>▪ God's reality is connected to the church</li>   <li>▪ Includes all who name Christ</li> <li>▪ Bound by grace through faith</li>   <li>▪ Communitarian modeled on Trinity</li> <li>▪ Growing relationships that worship Christ</li> <li>▪ Scriptural reflection leads to service and worship</li> <li>▪ Christ is Lord over the community</li> <li>▪ Scripture is read as if the reader is addressed by Scripture; God is speaking to us and to others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Based on human personality</li> <li>▪ Devotion to cause or other as "cause" or ideology becomes our unity</li> <li>▪ Freedom ordered toward political or social gains with power in view</li> <li>▪ Primarily for the community itself but not "others outside"</li> <li>▪ Gifted-Powerful-Exceptional Person rules</li> <li>▪ Word of humans binds us together</li> <li>▪ Christ as a means to power and influence</li> <li>▪ Psychic analysis and reconstruction offered primarily as the method</li> <li>▪ Calculated engagement as competitors</li> <li>▪ Unwillingness for self-sacrifice but a call for others to suffer their losses</li> <li>▪ Mediated by elemental human desire for community</li> <li>▪ Primarily physical and emotional oneness</li>   <li>▪ Human ties, bonds and ideologies are all</li> <li>▪ Multiple Conversions to ideologies and personalities</li> <li>▪ Love of neighbor for gain, for influence or for validation of human-based best good</li> <li>▪ Cannot comprehend spiritual love and remains in human desire</li> <li>▪ Creates freedom to serve other/God is optional</li> <li>▪ Human allegiance or devotion connected to interest becomes society, order; collegiums pietatis</li> <li>▪ Excludes those viewed as weak, insignificant or different</li> <li>▪ Bound by human affection and shared experience</li> <li>▪ Communitarian modeled on Humanity</li> <li>▪ Growing relationships that replace Christ</li> <li>▪ Scriptural reflection leads to service</li>   <li>▪ Christ is subsumed by community</li> <li>▪ Scripture is read as if the reader is non-differentiated from the Person speaking to us through Scripture. We use Scripture to speak to others but not ourselves</li> </ul>



## Polanyi & Vella: Knowledge, Experience, & Vocare

Experiential learning as indwelling: to know our educational vision from within the proximal and tacit actions that move us toward the fulfillment of the same.

“...Indwelling, or empathy, is the proper means of knowing [humankind] and the humanities” (Polanyi, 1958, p. 16). What if we were to set out to “indwell” our vision/mission statement?

We meet with other indications of the wide functions of indwelling when we find acceptance to moral teachings described as their interiorization. To interiorize is to identify ourselves with the teachings in question, by making them function as the proximal term of a tacit moral knowledge [italics mine], as applied in practice. This establishes the tacit framework for our moral acts and judgments. And we can trace this kind of indwelling to logically similar acts in science. To rely on a theory for understanding nature is to interiorize it. For we are attending from the theory to things seen in its light, and are aware of the theory, while this using it, in terms of the spectacle that it serves to explain (p. 16).

This is why mathematical theory can be learned only by practicing its application: its true knowledge lies in our ability to use it . . . but if we regard the integration of particulars as an interiorization . . . it becomes a means of making certain things function as the proximal terms of tacit knowing [and in this] we may be aware of them in their bearing on the comprehensive entity which they constitute. It brings home to us that it is not by looking at things, but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning” (pp. 17-18).<sup>39</sup>

The proximal represents the particulars of an entity, and in focusing on these parts we can “know” what is happening, as in knowing “formal rules of prosody may deepen our understanding of so delicate a thing as a poem” yet it cannot replace the movement of the parts as in writing the poem. Similarly a race car driver can skillfully maneuver without particularly identifying all the parts of his skill. “The rules of rhyming and prosody do not tell me what a poem told me.” Typical of much of the sciences and what is known as education we work on compartmentalization, categorization, definition and exploration of parts apart from the whole, and do this in much of the sciences. At the same time, endless critique of a text or dissection of a frog can never express the fullness of meaning as in indwelling and telling the story or vicariously sense the thrill of a large frog-leap into a pond to escape a predator.

Polanyi continues to argue that tacit thought or knowledge “forms an indispensable part of all knowledge” and goes farther to postulate that, as in mathematical theory, one can only construct it “by relying on prior tacit knowing and [it] can only function as theory within an act of tacit knowing, which consists of attending from it to the previously established experience on which it bears” (p. 21). This might be analogous to sight where, to see clearly the Pleiades of seven stars one must look just to the

<sup>39</sup> “Joint meaning” refers to two ways of knowing, “proximal” and “distal” somewhat analogous to the German ideas of “wissen” and “können.” To know something we must experience it as “other” so that all meaning has a certain prerequisite of being displaced from “self.” In this sense Polanyi speaks of two semantic aspects of “knowing” where in the “proximal” we have knowledge that “we may not be able to tell.”



side of it attending from it so one can see its entirety. Copernicus and his followers knew this for about a century and a half until Newton proved it.

Polanyi continues to establish this idea by citing the foundation of all good research: it starts with the stating of a problem, or sensing the stated problem will bring out something heretofore, hidden. It is that “knowing more than we can tell” and the importance of dwelling within a situation so that we can “intimate the coherence of hitherto not comprehended particulars.”

### From “Knowledge & Experience” to Vocare

Whether or not we agree totally with the weight Polanyi gives to each side of this knowing, it is readily observable that knowing about something in the particulars of study, either fishing or the operations of a machine or stating psychological functions or mathematical theorems cannot bring students to embrace vocare or give them the sense of “habitus” necessary to integrate the knowing within being that leads to meaningful and faith-informed doing.

Sometimes the best teachers or coaches are those who have struggled with the field in its particulars so it can be broken down into steps that are comprehensible. At the same time, the instructor is called to know enough of the whole so that the examination of parts does not lead a loss of integrative perspective and the wholeness of a field as it interacts and integrates into a larger and comprehensible worldview—that is, it has meaning and values that we can tacitly sense leading us first to ongoing commitment, subsequently to personal commitment, next to this field as meaningful pursuit of a whole life under God’s sense of calling, and finally to wholeness. The reality of vocare depends on both indwelling the field of study so we are personal subjects (and verbs!) in the pursuit of inquiry as well as seekers of objective knowledge of the particular components. In this way vocare becomes more than materialistic pursuit of career, security, remuneration or success—it is the habitus of a life of learning because it involves and holds our person in a commitment to pursue discoveries that are not yet evident, but lie waiting in a sense of potential solution, anticipated but not explicitly understood.

We know more than we can tell—and experiential learning, because it is a bodily entrance into the subject matter, is an avenue for the discovery and exploration of this whole learning for a whole life that can give needed synergy and personal commitment and energy to the educational process. Another way to see these ways of learning is captured in a line from the film “The Curious Life of Benjamin Button” where it is observed, “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.” Living in a body and observing our body as a tool that explores life, gives insights to the mind that are impossible to have in mere abstracted knowing—it proves knowing (Romans 12:1-2). For instance, indwelling an intercultural experience can develop empathy and participatory understanding for the movements of another culture and the personalities formed in that setting, speaking that language and experiencing the organic metaphors of that culture as subject, not object. This reality seems to be at the heart of Christian education desires, knowledge of God that leads to participation, loving God and others and serving them as integral parts of God’s call.

The word in Philippians 2:1-13 echoes the same, “have this mind...which is yours in Christ” . . . enter participatory servanthood . . . discover the life of God lived for the world through you in community with God and others. Participatory and experiential learning allows us to move from the whole back to the parts, thereby utilizing better the knowledge of the parts toward the functioning of the whole.



Listening to the invitation of this section of Philippians reminds me of Job's statement after suffering, where he seems to highlight two forms of knowing, in his words: "My ears had heard of you, But now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:5).

### Knowledge through Experience

The goal of Christ's passion is an invitation to experience a particularly distinct kind of knowing through real participation in Christ-humility as serving others. The Philippians passage above has been seen in the history of Christian theology as a classic passage of self-emptying (kenosis). It is also a great example that when one needs to say something important, poetry says it better than prose (be it for mnemonic, metaphorical transcendence or whatever). Some of the best Pauline poetry occurs right here!

Tracing briefly Paul's faith-reasoning, we find he leads us further in by means of tacit knowledge—his experience as a call to our entering Christ's experience as well, with him. In serving and suffering for Christ, he affirms that God is advancing the gospel through him and invites them, through the general (and uncomfortable) affirmation that "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him," to join him (Phil. 1:29)! Then he proceeds to acknowledge that a normative progression of knowing Christ leads to embracing the fullness of who he is and what he did for us (one side of Christology) in and through a participation in living out through humility and service "the mind we have in Christ" (the other side of Christology). The NIV commentary (Bruce, 2007) states, "The Greek text could literally be rendered, 'Keep thinking this [attitude] among you, which [attitude] was also in Christ Jesus.'" This attitude in Christ is that "rights" should not be viewed as entitlement to privilege but a call to humility and service. The volitional and attitudinal aspects offered us "in Christ" lead to what might be well termed a literal "service-learning." Paul connects the call, this experience of Christ becoming ours, as God's work (vs. 12-13): "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

### Vocare

Knowing Christ begins with the factual and objective doctrinal acceptance of what he has done for us. The invitation to "suffer for him" in "humility" and "regard others as better than oneself" is a continuation of this journey to know Christ in his suffering. One can "know" doctrinally, but to know fully, one must voluntarily "take up one's cross" and experience life with Christ.

Such an invitation to knowing through the act of sacrificial service is reiterated in Romans 12:1-2.

These verses are a hinge binding all that God has done for the world (Romans 1-11) to our calling (Romans 12-end). This transition uses sacrifice to help us understand how we are to live out our calling in the use of our gifts. Note: we are to "offer our bodies as living sacrifices," and in this, we attain a fullness of knowing only accessible through experience. Vocare = response-ability, by grace, to God's call.

This section of scripture continues with similar exhortations as are found in Philippians, to enter into learning Christ through a mind of humility and the actions where grace-gifts are used in service to others (vs. 6-9).



Lesslie Newbigin (1989) says that in order for God's people to understand and respond to their calling, election cannot be viewed as privilege but as responsibility. Since we say in the same vision statement that "response to God's call" is as much a part of our educational commitment as "engaging ideas" then does not faithfulness to our educational promise require that we bring the means of learning how to respond to God's call into the areas of learning goals and assessment criteria?

### Intentionally Actualizing Northwestern College's Stated Mission

Vella (2001) states her assumptions about learners and learning:

- that learners have the capacity to learn
- that learners learn when they are actively engaged—cognitively, emotionally and physically—with the content
- new content can be presented through a learning task
- learning tasks promote accountability, in both educator and student.

The teacher is responsible to present the content in an appropriate context that engages students in an exploration appropriate to the subject, and the student is to engage in active inquiry with the learning community.

I believe that from our respective disciplines, we would all agree and pretty much be on board with these points—but here is where I find a gap or at least a nagging question that I would like to dialogue about, relating to a classic question about learning.

Vella uses a "WWW" question as she begins any educational needs assessment: "Who needs what as determined by whom?" (Hutchinson, as cited in Vella, 2001, p. 5). If we take our mission and vision statement as foundational, (and I mean by this that we use it to design learning in our disciplines, departments and courses), then mustn't the four aspects or outcomes we desire of students be in view as we construct our syllabi and design Gen Ed curricula? Put another way, "How does the subject matter or course, in a particular discipline at NWC find accountability to our over-arching mission/vision statement?" If this is an educational promise we make to students, a covenant and a sort of learning contract, then how do we design learning with these ultimate goals in mind?

If this is an educational promise we make to students, a covenant and a sort of learning contract, then how do we design learning with these ultimate goals in mind? To get at this "nagging question" for myself, I have decided to place the four goals of the V4L over my syllabi as I design them and make sure I can see where I am seeking to give them incarnated learning space in particular modes during the course. For this to occur I need the students to see that I am assuming these as foundational. As one theologian has said, "What is not assumed cannot be redeemed" (St Gregory of Nazianzus<sup>40</sup>). I am inviting my students to reflect with me this semester on how well my particular courses reflect the covenant of learning we all share together on this journey.

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<sup>40</sup> Eastern Church Father (c. 325-389) who wrote prose and poetry that was theologically infused



## Part III: Epilogue

### Epilogue –Together: Listening, Journeying, Living Vocare

#### Listening

An excerpt from My Grandfather's Blessings by Rachel Remen (2000, p72-73):

Recently during a physicians' seminar on listening, we all took out our stethoscopes and spent several minutes listening to our own hearts. We are all middle-aged people and for the first little while everyone anxiously diagnosed themselves, fearful of hearing a split S1, a third heart sound, or perhaps the murmur of an arteriosclerotic valve. But as time went on, we moved past all that and heard something steadfast in the midst of our lives that had been there always.

Afterward there was a silence. Then one of the cardiologists present began to speak about his work and to wonder aloud how one could be so close to something holy and not know it. It reminded him, he said, of a prayer that he had heard some time back. Somewhat embarrassed, he began to recite aloud:

Days pass and the years vanish and we walk sightless among miracles. Lord, fill our eyes with seeing and our minds with knowing. Let there be moments when your Presence, like lightening, illumines the darkness in which we walk. Help us to see, wherever we gaze, that the bush burns, unconsumed. And we, clay touched by God, will reach out for holiness and exclaim in wonder, "How filled with awe is this place and we did not know it."

I had heard the final line many times before. It was one of my grandfather's favorites"

#### Journeying

##### An Experience from My Missionary Diaries

The water was brown, swollen and rolling with the newly found power of July rains in the Sahel. Our Peugeot 504 station wagon was parked at the edge of the stream as we deliberated the crossing. As with many roads in Northern Cameroon the radier was totally submerged (radier is a French term for a poured cement slab functioning as a platform over the sand in seasonal riverbeds in the Sahel). The depth of the water was unknown, yet we were determined to cross it.

I had been ill with what was to be diagnosed as a subcutaneous skin infection complicated by a coincidental attack of malaria. My temperature was high and I needed to see our veteran field nurse. As we pondered the crossing a person forded the stream on foot in water near his knees. We decided it was time to go – after all, it was raining and the stream could get deeper!

From somewhere in the missionary advice category of my brain recesses, a practical admonition surfaced - Keep your eyes focused on the middle of the road on the other side of the stream. The danger in crossing currents like this is the tendency to watch the water movement on the surface and attempt



to steer “away from” the flow and so end up driving off the radier and into stream. Thankfully, the advice paid off! We arrived and after some time of treatment and bed rest I recovered. The gut-wrenching event remains strongly etched in my memory. The danger was averted through the application of wise counsel and the focused reference on the “non-moving” part of the road.

### In Community and Communion

I am reminded again of how the fourth chapter in the letter to the Ephesians starts with the encouragement to see our practical expression of life and unity as Trinitarian reality breaking in upon us, mediated through Christ’s work. What keeps catching my eye is that we grow up in fullness as each part, each piece, “does its work.”

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. . . . He . . . gave gifts to men. . . . To prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:1-1)

### Vocare and Final Integration of Learning to Life: Indwelling-Incarnation-Discovery

“But what really makes a Christian liberal arts education distinctively Christian?”

Vocare is the indwelling of our education, occupation and life so that there is a distinctive pervading unity and purpose to what we do. Calling is the mark of a whole life lived now in the full realization of realities we cannot see but know to be true. How do we discover calling?<sup>41</sup>

I have thought often these last months on how this elusive awareness or recognition of calling from God comes about. Because it is our final purpose toward which our Vision for Learning moves, it is, in my mind, the answer to my colleague’s query, “What really makes a Christian liberal arts education Christian?”

It is a good question, one I often experience as part of the struggle for the quality of education we desire within the community of educators of whom I am privileged to be a part. It is this grand and terrible question that sets us apart (or not) from the merely secular.

It seems to me that the wonderful gift of calling, that ability to see ourselves personally invited into God’s larger and informing Story, does involve an action of faith as trust, often tied to serving others in real and non-role-played ways. Recognizing calling may require some kind of risk of “being shocked.” Somehow, perhaps because of the character of the gospel story itself, learning of this nature demands a

<sup>41</sup> Vocare, from the NWC website “Vocare: Find Your Place” is a Northwestern College project funded by a \$2.5 million grant from the Lilly Endowment. “Vocare” is a Latin verb that means “to call” and communicates specifically a call from God. The many initiatives of Vocare, which began in 2002, all have as their common goal helping Northwestern students discover and then commit to their calling—not just in a career, but also in their families, churches, communities and cultures. Vocare seeks to help students better integrate their academic, spiritual and co-curricular learning and experiences while at Northwestern. It also seeks to help students see how wisdom gained from that integration can guide their decision-making as they prepare to use their gifts to meet the world’s needs” (Vocare, 2009).



space of real service to others. Such actions can open our being to a fuller awareness of personhood, to be had only in the living and giving of one's life- "whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39).

I believe this is where spiritual formation, mission and service learning programs can offer their course at the grand feast of higher education; the opportunity to learn humility. And with this humility in serving comes a worshipful sense of awe in the mundane and bothersome task of losing oneself for Other—just so is our cruciform shaped calling in Christ. This final cup at the meal, the attitudinal and volitional component that complements and completes all others, gives to others the best of what our educational self can be and delivers the real goods in Christian higher education.

So how do we get students there? We don't. While we can actually make a lot happen in our formal settings through encouragements, methods, personality, grades, testing and so forth—with great creativity at times, we cannot make and should not wish to enter in forceful ways upon the sacrosanct freedom of the individual's volition as to Whom and How they will live their live; how they will spend this fleeting treasure that we really only begin to appreciate in retrospect and often too late. We can manipulate some kinds of knowing but for others, we can only offer a space in which discovery can occur. And humbly work and pray that it does.

This space for volitional choice in the human spirit is where the best of all contributors—Enlightenment, Creation Story, Abraham Lincoln, Reformational heritage, Martin Luther King, Black History, and the NWC Vision for Learning—with all students can say a hearty "Amen!" This learning space must always remain free, non-conditioned, non-coerced "educational gospel" space. If the human will is meant to serve, it must be free to do so in love.

Polanyi (1958), speaking of the place where the highest achievements of learning in the natural sciences, come together, addresses this ultimate question.

The point is reached here at which the observer's appraisal of biological achievement turns into his [her] submission to the leadership of superior minds . . . where the appraisal of living beings merges into an acknowledgement of the ideals transmitted by our intellectual heritage. This is the point where evolution finally bursts through the bounds of natural science and becomes entirely an affirmation of man's ultimate aims. For the emerging noosphere [our knowing in paradigms, epistemologies and worldviews] is wholly determined at that which we believe to be true and right; it is at the external pole of our commitments, the service which is our freedom. It defines a free society as a fellowship fostering truth and respecting the right. It comprises everything in which we may [also] be totally mistaken (pp. 404-405).

Experiential learning programs are essential to Christian higher education because we know the difference and always will know, between doing something as a project for a grade in a controlled setting and risking ourselves in the free act of loving others through serving.

### Living Vocare

Reflections as to how vocare "completes" a distinctly Christian liberal arts education follow.



### Reflection by Kadie Becker

What does it mean to learn to live life with others? In her article, "Remembering Managua," Claire McLendon refers to "the many places I was born" (McLendon 2003). I was born again in the countryside of Nicaragua into a new life, a new reality, where life seems very different than before. We always need to be opened to our personal cultural interpretation and learn from it and others. Objectivity is a communal process that needs the subjective thoughts of everyone at the table.

Right now, in my personal development, I believe that what is truly good for a person, truly and completely good, is not culturally relative. Goodness is universal. In Isaiah chapter 53, a prophecy of Jesus is given and later it becomes reality. Jesus was a "man of sorrow, familiar with suffering" who "took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows." His cup was full and the cup he offers us is full.

Do we drink it . . . allowing the reality of others to become part of ours? Do we choose to believe the "everyday" is sacred, because people are sacred?

For too long I have lived a life that is separate from the lives of people around me. I do not think I can make all the pains in the world disappear, but maybe that should not be the first objective. Maybe when we drink the cup that Jesus offers us and we eat the bread and we live life with people, Jesus invites us to share in his life, share in his pain, share the pain of the world. After sharing a person's pain then together we are able to try and change our situation, our reality. This adds the fullness of reality to the integration of faith and learning.

I lived with Mayra for only six days, but because she shared her life with me, my life is different. Mayra's life is full, full of joy but also full of sadness. One night we conversed about machismo and marriage. "You need to find a good spouse, Kadie...a spouse who will share your sadness."

Because of living with Mayra, listening to her stories, and sharing her reality, my reality is different.

Can I drink this cup, this cup of life that is full of joy and sadness? Alone, no; in community, yes.

In these ways, I was born again in Nicaragua in order to truly live . . . I choose a full life.

Kadie Becker, Nicaragua Essay from her experiences in a semester abroad, 4 March 2008

### Reflection by Lindsay Squires

So often I find myself shifting on this oak bench, my gaze fixed out the terrace window, studying the weathered contours of grey apartment blocs, measuring the coal smokestacks, searching the forested tresses of the mountains. Am I really here in Romania again, Lord?



Yesterday I was walking uncertain onto the NWC campus, wondering if I was in the right place but trusting God to somehow use it. Now I am living in my calling, certain that the past four years and every year from my childhood have prepared me to live this answer. Participating in the Romania semester at NWC became a catalyst for transforming my education into something I can now offer back to this place and its people as a volunteer.

It seems I am now soaking this entire new context into my pores, as this place is becoming so deeply entrenched in my being. As the sense of being Romanian washes over me I'm feeling all broken and all alive at the same time, even disbelieving, trembling and amazed that God is writing me into the larger story of a country's social restoration.

Yet how am I to daily live this offering? How do I become broken bread and poured out wine in other lives, so that my knowledge is blessed and multiplied?

I am finding that when I allow the spaces of my brokenness to be filled with this Eternal-Love first broken for me, Gospel-life somehow flows through the cracks of my human fragility and runs in abundance toward others. Such life spills over to others in the smallest acts of love and mercy, acts that press hope into hard places and bring light into dark spaces. Kingdom-moments are woven into the mundane, along with hard choices of how to respond.

I seek to embrace the moments in a love borne from the stripes of a wounded Christ. With confidence born of being so loved, I am willing to risk the fear of failing by trusting to be multiplied exponentially by the power of God's grace and extravagant abundance!

Lindsay Squires, in fall of 2007, through a Lilly Grant initiative, spent a semester studying in Romania with six other NWC students. On June 30, 2009 she arrived in Lupeni, Romania, returning as a volunteer with the New Horizons team. She proofreads/edits the English version of the IMPACT manual. She also participates in the strategic planning for the foundation. The New Horizons web site is <http://www.new-horizons.ro/> You can follow Lindsay's Blog at [www.holdingbytheedges.blogspot.com](http://www.holdingbytheedges.blogspot.com) Reflection submitted August 23, 2009.

In Nouwen's (1992) reflective work on spiritual living in a secular world entitled *Life of the Beloved*, he writes of four aspects of life we must discover and why what we term calling is so important to all the other aspects and is indeed the integrating component for all of life.

We are chosen, blessed, and broken so as to be given. The fourth aspect of the life of the Beloved is to be given. For me, personally, this means that it is only as people who are given that we can fully understand or be chosen, blessed, and broken. In the giving it becomes clear that we are chosen, blessed, and broken not simply for our own sakes, but so that all we live finds its final significance in its being lived for others (Nouwen, 1992, p. 105).



## Concluding Thought

There is no method that will take us into the nirvana of integrated learning . . . the process awaits and leads to discovery. Our greatest assets are the community we have; well-informed facilitators and educators who embody the vision, forward-thinking administration, committed staff, and outstanding students! Traveling together, listening and truth-seeking, with proper confidence in the Story-Maker, our little, offered to God, is enough. So let's spit on our whetstones, sharpen our scythes and take courage to keep exploring the task and learning spaces of our calling as we wade into the thistles!



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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Visioning—Just a Good Idea

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#### **Visioning: More than Just a Good Idea**

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Bonnie Straight  
James Walz, Ph.D.  
Regent University

*Leadership needs clear vision in order to move an organization in the desired direction. Understanding the process of developing a clear vision, or "visioning," can provide a powerful tool to establish direction, determine strategies, and motivate members to adopt the vision and commit to its long term fulfillment (Allen, 1995). This paper examines the process of visioning by defining the process, presenting characteristics of "good" visioning, and identifying variables that affect its outcome. From these characteristics and concepts, the authors have developed a Vision Development Process model. Two situations from the personal experience of one of the authors further illustrate the model.*

According to Lee (1993, p. 26), "The concept of vision has never been more important than in today's world of flattened, delayered, decentralized organizations." Strategic plans that flow from well thought out visions and that are shared by a critical mass of the membership positively influence growth and profitability in organizations (Miller & Cardinal, 1994). Organizational Development (OD) specialists are often called upon to design and facilitate the visioning process. Likewise, managers must lead both the visioning itself and the follow-on implementation. Each needs to understand how best to develop a clear, effective vision and then foster and maintain broad-based commitment to its ultimate realization.

This paper examines visioning by reviewing the literature, defining and identifying the characteristics of

good visioning, determining key variables that affect the outcome, and articulating and modeling the process itself. The reader will gain insight into the body of knowledge surrounding this important topic and will be better equipped to create and implement a vision within their own organization or to facilitate the visioning process for others as a consultant.

#### **Approach**

In his discussion of "reading" a situation, Morgan (1997) begins with the premise that all theory is metaphor, then posits that any particular metaphor produces a one-sided perspective and can thereby create distortions in understanding (p. 4). But metaphors also provide invaluable insight, so he proposes approaching any situation we seek to understand by considering a variety of perspectives



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and building on the strengths of the different points of view (p. 6).

We have taken this approach to modeling the visioning process. Rather than seeking one best-in-class approach, we chose to incorporate a variety of perspectives, blending the best of each into one inclusive model.

### Visioning Defined

Webster defines visioning as "perceiving something not actually visible, as through mental acuteness or keen foresight" (Allen, 1995, p. 1). Merriam-Webster adds, "the act or power of imagination, a mode of seeing or conceiving, unusual discernment or insight" (Britannica Online). The Hebrew word commonly translated as vision, (transliterated *chazon*), refers to ecstatic or prophetic-state visions, and to perceiving with intelligence and understanding (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon).

Proverbs 29:18 (KJV) states that, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Allen, 1995, p. 1). It is also translated, "Where there is no prophecy or revelation the people cast off restraint" (RSV, NIV). In either case, the implication is that, without a clear and uniting vision of who they are and where they are going corporately, organization members become self-focused and go off in their individual directions to the detriment of the group.

### Characteristics of Good Visioning

The modern concept of visioning originally evolved from two management techniques popular in the 1950's and 1960's: management by objectives (MBO), and strategic planning (Info-Line, 1991). The early

forms of vision that resulted from those processes were often dry and uninspired because they were simply handed down from senior management and failed to engage the spirit, soul, or intellect of the broader organization. Subsequently, the idea of vision has taken on a far deeper meaning and the processes for developing visions have grown in complexity.

For Bennis (1992), visioning begins in the mind of the leader or leadership team as a product of imagination, hunches, and values, and is therefore part reason and part emotion. Allen (1995) proposes that visioning include reviewing, rethinking, and reaffirming an organization's identity and purpose.

For Collins and Porras (1996), visioning is about discovering the organization's core ideology by introspection and then creating the future from that base. Similarly, Doyle (1990) describes visioning as "a deep voyage into the heart and soul of an organization," a journey that involves time and reflection, a journey that evolves and becomes more focused over time, but that does not change substantially in the short run. Senge (1990) and Denton (1997) perceive visioning as seeing clearly where one wants to be in the future and, equally as important, telling the truth about where one is today. For Hill and Levenhagen (1995, p. 1057), visioning is "sensemaking," developing a vision or mental model of how the environment works, and "sensegiving," communicating the vision to others and gaining their support for it.

A major goal of visioning is idea generation and development resulting in the creation of definable paths and destinations from large amounts of information and inspiration. The resulting vision statement should



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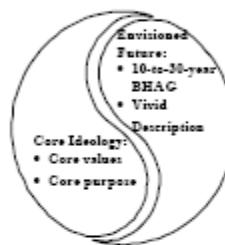
inspire, guide, and encourage people (Lucas, 1998). Some other perspectives on what constitutes a good vision include:

1. It is compelling, exciting, clear, crisp, gut-grabbing, magic, tangible, energizing, highly focused, risky, vividly descriptive, and motivating (Collins & Porras, 1991).
2. It is vivid, metaphorical, appealing, simple, emotive, credible, and deeply held (Conger, 1991).
3. It is based on aspirations, hopes, and dreams, as opposed to fear or threats (Denton, 1997; Senge, 1990).
4. It is understandable and evocative (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995).
5. It pulls the organization into the future, rather than pushes it (Lucas, 1998; Senge, 1990).
6. It stretches an organization beyond its current resources, beyond its normal thinking, beyond reality as it is presently understood (Richards, 1995).

However, the power of vision can work ill within an organization as well. When unchallenged and simply accepted as true, even good visions can "freeze a perception of the world for individuals within a firm and lead to provincial or myopic perspectives" (Hesse, Mason & Mitroff, and Morgan as cited by Hill & Levenhagen, 1995, p. 1066). Also, a dangerous "cognitive stability" can set in and constrain the organization's ability to adapt, a potentially fatal occurrence in a dynamic environment (Korzybski, and Barr, et. al., as cited by Hill & Levenhagen, 1995, p. 1066).

#### Key Concepts

Good visions result from visioning processes built around certain key concepts, such as (a) method of articulation, (b) creative tension, (c) translation of core values, (d) metaphors and mental models, and (e) a clear distinction between means and vision.



**Figure 1.** Articulating a Vision. Components of an effective vision. (Based on Collins & Porras, 1996, p. 67)

#### Method of Articulation

Collins and Porras (1996, p. 66-67) present their conceptual framework graphically as a yin-yang image (see Figure 1). Core ideology, their yin, includes implicit core values that define who the members of the organization are and a core purpose that articulates why they exist. Their focus is on discovery rather than creation of core values and purpose, since they propose that these values and purpose already exist and, in fact, drove the original formation of the organization. These core concepts are often quite different from the explicitly stated values and purpose,



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and their discovery requires relentless honesty.

The envisioned future, their yang, is what the organization aspires to become, to achieve, and to create. The future is described through "big hairy, audacious goals (BHAG)," risky goals that reason calls unreasonable, but of which intuition says "we believe that we can do it nonetheless," and which require significant change and progress to attain (p. 73).

#### Creative Tension

Senge (1990) observes that the key to organizational creativity is not vision alone, but rather what he calls the creative tension between vision and current reality. The most effective organizations are those that can hold their vision while remaining committed to seeing current reality clearly and honestly (see Figure 2).

A hallmark of such an organization is a relentless willingness to examine "what is" in light of its vision. This willingness depends in large part on openness, the norm of speaking openly and honestly about important issues and the capacity to challenge one's own

thinking (Senge, 1990).

Argyris (as cited by Senge, 1990) found that the difference between great teams and mediocre teams lies in how they face conflict and deal with the defensiveness that invariably surrounds it. Problems typically lie not in the visions, but in our reactive orientation toward current reality, our insistence on the idea that the organization's problems are not of our own making but rather the creation of somebody "out there."

Visioning by its very nature generates conflict. It becomes important for organizations that are serious about sustaining this creative tension to master essential communication skills, e.g., dialogue, discussion, and inquiry.

#### Translation of Core Values

Vision grows out of an accumulation of cognitive experiences by former and current members of the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). These experiences produce guiding values, which can be both good and bad. The history of humanity is full of examples where a visionary's perverted values were elevated to action, resulting in chaos. Adolph Hitler had a vision of a German empire that included extermination of all Jews and non-whites.

Therefore, good visioning must be based on a moral and ethical foundation, with deeply held, culturally important meaning (Conger, 1991). By focusing attention on a vision, the leader operates on the emotional and spiritual resources of the organization, on its values, commitment, and aspirations (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). Since the purpose of visioning is to guide, inspire, and unite and not to



Figure 2. Creative tension between current reality and vision of the future. (Based on Senge, 1990, Fall, p. 9)



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differentiate (Collins & Porras, 1996), the organization must weave its philosophical principles into the fabric of daily organizational life, and translate general value statements into specific policies (Ledford, et al., 1995).

Good vision is very personal, requiring the commitment and participation of all members of the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). A key to visioning success is weaving each member's personal vision into one comprehensive, concise, commonly held or shared vision, where corporate and personal values and aspirations are brought into relative alignment (Senge, 1990; Seymour, 1995). As members help to shape the vision through their participation, it begins to reflect their own personal visions - pictures or images in their hearts and minds about their own futures and their contributions to the organization (Snyder & Graves, 1994).

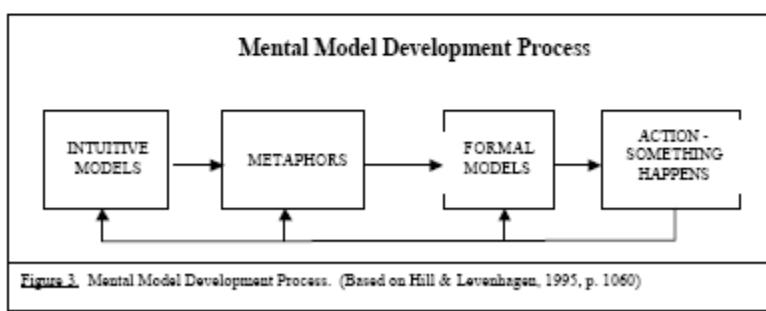
#### Metaphors and Mental Models

In the visioning process, an individual leader or the leadership team begins by developing an initial vision or a mental model of how the environment works (sensemaking) and then communicates that image to others to gain their support (sensegiving). Metaphors provide a common language

for this communication. The mental model development process described by Hill and Levenhagen (1995) underlies these sensemaking/sensegiving tasks (see Figure 3). Their process moves from intuitive models, imprecise, open-ended felt belief systems, to metaphors, incomplete statements of one thing in terms of another, to formal models, more refined and distinctly articulated models, to action, actual implementation of the vision.

The feedback loops to earlier stages represent refinements to the models as the visioning process proceeds over time. This is a picture of the organizational learning described by Argyris and Schön (as cited by Hill & Levenhagen, p. 1061).

Metaphors are particularly effective at capturing and conveying large amounts of information and ideas and are most potent when they evoke meanings or symbols that have deep cultural roots and, consequently, elicit strong emotions (Hill & Levenhagen). Using metaphors leaders are able to give clearer meaning to the visioning process and transform an appealing dream into tomorrow's reality (Conger, 1991).



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**Clear Distinction between Means and Vision**

The visioning process provides a connective link between means and vision. Confusion arises when these elements are not clearly distinguished. Means should neither be mistaken for the vision nor replace the vision. The means are simply tools to accomplish the vision. Many organizations, unable to envision the desired result, end up dwelling on the means. Naisbitt (1984) provides a good example of this when he describes the railroad industry's vision of being in the railroad business, rather than the goods- and people-moving business.

The result of visioning must be a clearly defined target that beckons the organization forward (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). The means of reaching the destination may change, following learning paths not initially apparent (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995). Changes in perspectives such as values, norms, and world-view become apparent. Therefore, throughout the visioning process, effective leaders pay attention to what is going on in the organization and determine the aspects of current reality that will be important for the envisioned future. Then they set a new direction, and concentrate the attention of the entire organization upon it (Bennis & Nanus, 1997).

**Variables Affecting the Visioning Process**

Senge (1990) highlights a number of moderating variables that influence the visioning process: (1) clarity, (2) enthusiasm, (3) communication, (4) commitment, (5) diversity, and (6) polarization. He then provides scenarios demonstrating different ways these variables might play together to

affect the eventual growth (or demise) of a vision as it is developed.

In the ideal situation, virtually unlimited growth and acceptance occur when a vision taps into the core values and aspirations of the various members of the organization and aligns them with the organization's core ideology. As more people become involved in discussing and reflecting upon the vision, the idea grows clearer and enthusiasm for and commitment to its potential benefits build. The vision spreads in a reinforcing spiral of communication and excitement, spurred on by successful early prototypes and easy fixes that reinforce its efficacy.

Such growth, however, cannot go on forever. Entropy sets in and, as more people at a greater distance from the original core leadership group talk about the vision, the diversity of views increases, leading to potentially conflicting visions reflecting unresolved differences in values and aspirations. Polarization increases, reducing the clarity of the vision and limiting the growth if not the level of enthusiasm. The limiting factor in this case is the organization's ability to resolve the resulting conflicts in ways that build deeper, more commonly held visions.

Similarly, as people become more aware of the gap between the vision and the current reality, they can become disheartened or even cynical due to the difficulty and seeming impossibility of the goals, leading to a decline in enthusiasm and commitment. The limiting factor in this case is the capacity of members to articulate and sustain acceptable levels of creative tension.

Particularly in times of downsizing, where a fixed workload tends to be



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spread over a decreasing number of workers, people can become overwhelmed by the demands of the current reality. They can lose focus on or sight of the vision from sheer lack of energy and time to worry about such things. Clarity, enthusiasm, and focus tend to wane rapidly under these conditions.

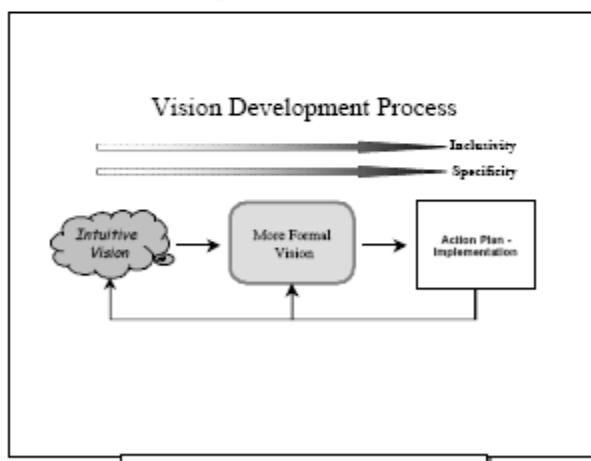
These same pressures can also cause people to stop asking, "What do we really want to create?" and begin proselytizing the "official vision," causing the quality of the ongoing conversation to erode. The powerfully motivating sense of connection to a larger purpose and to one another begins to dissipate, as do clarity, enthusiasm, and commitment to the vision.

#### A Visioning Model

The Vision Development Process model (see Figure 4) builds on a modified form of Hill and Levenhagen's

mental model development process (see Figure 3). The details of the model are a synthesis of characteristics and concepts discussed in the preceding sections. Like Hill and Levenhagen's model, the level of detail in our resulting vision shifts over time from general to specific, beginning in concept and culminating in action. However, the development process also becomes progressively more inclusive.

Hill and Levenhagen use metaphors to give meaning to the vision, enabling leaders to more effectively "sell" it and gain support from others. Our model depends upon the active participation of all members in the vision creation process itself. From the beginning, members draw upon their personal visions, values, and aspirations to help create and give the organizational vision shared meaning. In other words, as the vision becomes more specific over time, it does so by becoming more inclusive.



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Note also that visioning is not a singular, initiating event but rather a continuum, an ongoing process that spans the life of the organization. Periodically members revisit the less constrained intuitive stage to refresh creativity and avoid undue "cognitive stability." Similarly, the vision itself is not a static picture of some distant future but a living, evolving idea. We propose that the vision and its underlying values, purpose, and assumptions must remain open to challenge by anyone with a personal stake in the outcome. During the process, important organizational learning occurs, influencing members' understanding of the meaning and articulation of the vision, indicated by the feedback loops in the model.

### Intuitive Vision

The senior leadership team reaches alignment on implicit organizational values and purpose, articulating the organization's core ideology. This process requires relentless honesty, relying on advanced dialogue and inquiry skills to move past defenses and achieve honest consensus without assigning blame to any particular person or group. Based on the organizational values and purpose, and relying in part on their intuition and instinct, the senior leadership team crafts an initial vision, one that incorporates "big hairy, audacious goals."

The team then gathers information on the current state of the organization, from both the external environment and internal conditions. The clarity and truthfulness with which this picture is developed is particularly important. A norm of speaking openly and a willingness to challenge one's own thinking should replace the

instinctively reactive, defensive orientation of leadership.

The resulting tension between a vision firmly anchored in the future and current reality provides the motivating force that breaks the organization out of the status quo and propels it forward. The difference between the vision and the initial conditions must be compelling enough to motivate and inspire, without discouraging and intimidating. Both future and present states must be verifiable through data and shared experience to avoid hyperbole and mere slogans.

### More Formal Vision

Bringing the rest of leadership, both formal and informal leaders, into the process accomplishes broader leadership alignment. They will need to go through the same process of personal introspection and organizational core ideology discovery, needing the same dialogue and inquiry skills in order to reach true consensus. The vision becomes more specific, more detailed as more individuals articulate their own personal aspirations and link them to the corporate model. During this phase, the entire leadership team prepares for ongoing dialogue with the work force. Metaphors developed during this stage enhance communication of the vision, not merely to "sell" the vision, but to deepen understanding and to ensure full participation.

Communicating the vision requires a continuous learning process to nurture the vision's deep roots and broad branches. Effective leaders communicate the vision through many forms (particularly stories) and revise it during its implementation. The language of leadership defines the purpose of the organization in a



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meaningful way, interprets reality for followers, selects and amplifies values and beliefs, and interprets events (Conger, 1991).

During this stage of the process, results flow back into the statements of values, purpose, and vision, further refining them, so that they more fully reflect the perspectives of the entire organization. Likewise, reflection on the larger picture brings change to the values and purpose held by the various individuals, changing hearts and minds in the process.

**Actionable Vision**

As the vision matures, an implementation plan develops which connects the vision with the means to bring it into existence. With a clearly defined and accepted target, and a consensus on current reality, essential areas of advantage appear. Barriers to progress are highlighted, strategies for overcoming them are crafted, metrics for assessing progress are developed, and specific responsibilities for plan execution are assigned by name.

Vision implementation becomes the central work of the organization, as opposed to a collateral duty. Critical performance data becomes widely available and usable for well-trained members. The organization budgets for resources to accomplish the vision and aligns reward and recognition systems to reinforce and encourage desired behaviors. Leadership behavior also changes, modeling the new ways, including a relentless willingness to continuously and openly examine the "what is" in light of the unfolding vision.

**Summary**

Vision and the process by which it is created has never been more important than it is today. It is generally accepted that a good vision is vivid, clear, descriptive and aspiration driven. There are a number of moderating variables that influence the effectiveness of the visioning process: clarity, enthusiasm, communication, commitment, diversity, and polarization.

The vision development process described in this paper is essentially an adaptation of a similar mental model development process designed by Hill and Levenhagen. As the vision moves from a vague, intuitive stage to its more formal and, ultimately, actionable stage, it also becomes more specific and, necessarily, more inclusive of other members of the workforce.

Despite broad consensus, however, some are beginning to challenge the more established notions around visioning and the process of its development. Wheatley (1999) looks within the emerging theories of quantum physics for metaphors to further illuminate concepts of leadership, strategy, and the management of change. She proposes that a vision is a field and that when we create a vision we create a power rather than a place, an influence rather than a destination (Wheatley, p. 55). She and Hock (1999) both call for more inclusive, organization-wide participation in vision creation and suggest that the old distinction between leaders and followers has become essentially meaningless.

These theories are on the cutting edge of our understanding of organizations and how they work. They put in question the established concept



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of vision and the role it plays in organizational performance as well as the nature and role of leadership in its implementation. They challenge the very foundation upon which our understanding of visioning rests and, therefore, call for further, more extensive research, particularly in the areas of relationships and trust and their impact on the visioning development and implementation processes.

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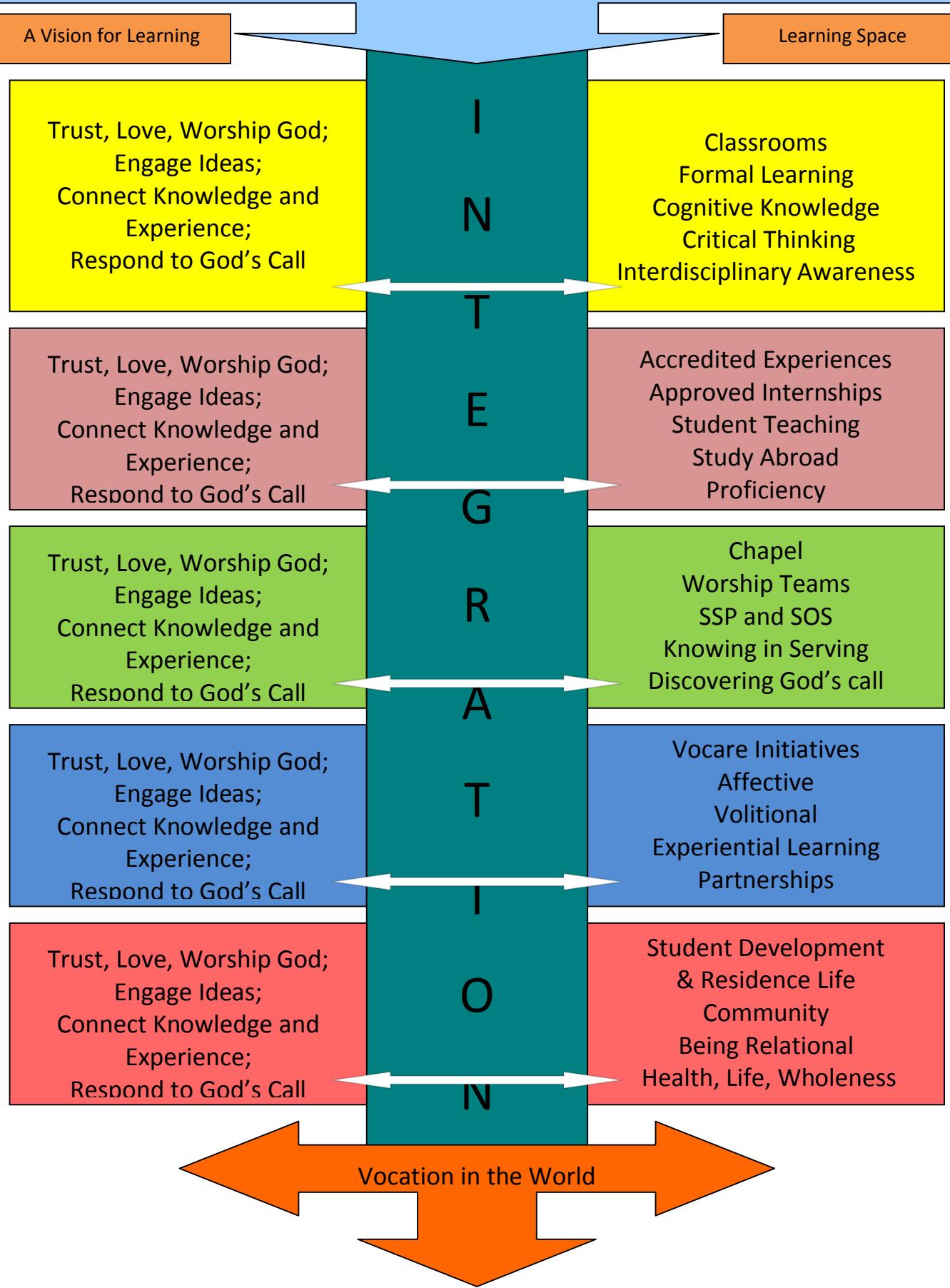
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## Appendix B: Schema of Education at Northwestern College



Where and how does each particular area of the NWC Community make its best contribution to one or more of the Four Goals in A Vision for Learning?



Schematic by Rod Spidahl and Justin Jansen (2008)

## Appendix C: Links

Link to Video: Teach Your Children Well

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6pphVs8bF0>

Link to NWC's vision statement: A Vision for Learning:

<http://www.nwciowa.edu/vision/>

Link to Article: Community 101: Students and professor learn the struggles of living together in Mission House

<http://assets.nwciowa.edu/classic/public/content/pdf/cssp2007.pdf>

Link to Video: Tommy

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJCBF0t\\_K\\_c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJCBF0t_K_c)

Link to Article: Uncertainty: A Fruitful Place to Be

<http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol2iss1/practitioner/practitioner.htm>

