

University of Mobile Forum on Christianity and the Liberal Arts “Values and Character Formation in the Liberal Arts Classroom” September 24-25, 2010

Abstracts

Donald K. Berry, University of Mobile “History in Dialogue with Theology: The Holocaust in Higher Education”

If one considers higher education in any of its aspects as a student’s preparation for engagement with the world, or, from a communal perspective, as a means to a better world, then studies of some of the great moral failures of recent centuries can offer relevant subject matter for university classes. The Holocaust is one such failure. The Holocaust involved the murder of six million Jews by the German government from 1941 to 1945.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to approach this terror dispassionately. Nor is it advisable to teach the Holocaust with a cool neutrality which could be interpreted as mimicking the Nazi’s own mechanistic approach to the killings. The Holocaust provoked worldwide changes in moral thought with particular effects on academia. The Holocaust continues to directly affect the everyday lives of millions of people in the US, Israel, and a host of other countries—the survivors as well as the families of both victims and survivors. With this as background, this paper offers some reflections on the moral impact of the Holocaust on western society and some recommendations on the values-based considerations that may create a framework for Holocaust education. Moral questions include the investigation of how such a catastrophe could have happened in the heart of Europe in the 20th century; why the allies and others were so slow and ineffective in their efforts to protect and rescue Jewish lives; and theological questions, including challenges to God’s very existence.

Given the immense depth of the tragedy, it should be approached with particular sensitivity. Every effort must be made not to add to the pain that survivors and families experience. It must involve the remembrance of those whose rights, names, and faces were lost in the violence. Despite our revulsion, we must attempt to rehearse the horrors in truthful proportions rather than improving its storyline for the sake of contemporary tastefulness. And the Holocaust can never be taught in isolation from ongoing acts of barbarity that threaten the security of other minority groups.

The Holocaust deserves its place in liberal arts institutions. The Holocaust has exerted influence on various disciplines. It introduces ethical questions that enable students to examine the values they hold in light of what is good for humanity as a whole. Existentially, students may even be led to make actual decisions about what behaviors are best.

Among the potential benefits of this moral education on the basis of the Holocaust, our students may learn that they cannot validly separate themselves from the unjust suffering of others. To improve the record of the past generations, representatives of the next generation may, after reflecting on history, both prohibit and challenge behaviors that threaten human security. Our world is increasingly diverse, yet our society remains better at teaching suspicion than understanding. Many citizens are preoccupied with protecting themselves from the threat that outsiders pose. Is there not a balancing obligation to protect the outsider from the threat posed by xenophobic groups that have the power to dominate? Passionate teaching of the Holocaust helps to ensure this obligation is met.

William Alves Biserra, Universidade de Brasilia
“Female Sanctity as Political Game in Michele Roberts’ *The Wild Girl* and *Impossible Saints*”

Contemporary British author Michele Roberts subverts the gender roles assigned to women in Catholic tradition. Her novels portray Female sanctity as a political game allowing women to undermine Roman patriarchy.

Michele Roberts is a prolific author systematically dealing with gender questions. Her novels also highlight the role of women in the making of Roman Catholicism and how these women were co-opted or left aside by the all-male clergy. This paper focuses on two of Roberts' novels: *The Wild Girl* and *Impossible Saints*. Both narratives present the story of very assertive religious women, Mary Magdalene in *The Wild Girl* and Teresa of Avila in *Impossible Saints*. Many such women have risen in Christian history and, sooner or later, they had to face the sexism of the orthodox church. Roberts questions the making of official history with a feminist approach; in “herstory” the perspective changes dramatically. How does the author create her fictional account of these women? What are the boundaries between fiction and history? What are the literary strategies used by a novelist to deconstruct sexist metanarratives? Fiction rises as a mediator of possibilities in historiography. The silenced women in Catholic history can now be given voice.

Geraldine P. DeFelix, Chipola College
“Morals and Ethics for Today’s Students: If Not Taught in the Classroom, Then Where?”

Based on more than thirty years of practical experience in the classroom (including four years of substitute teaching in K-12, seventeen years of teaching in public secondary schools, and thirteen years of teaching at a state community college), the author shares observations and ideas she has used to develop strategies for teaching moral and ethical values in the secular educational setting.

The presenter’s examples of experiences with students of all ages show the imperative nature of the responsibility of Christian educators to help shape today’s youth with a stabilizing value system that many are not getting from their parent(s) or other guardians. Recognizing the deleterious effects of the subject matter, inappropriate language, violence, and nudity in the various forms of media that bombard young people continuously, many educators feel “called” to offer as much guidance and counseling through their class discussions, literature study, and writing assignments as possible. The selections of literature chosen by the English teacher can offer the perfect forum for studying and discussing various moral and ethical situations that may arise in one’s life.

The presenter will share a lesson featured at a recent Oxford Round Table Symposium on “God in Politics and Literature” held at Lincoln College, Oxford University, Oxford, England, to illustrate her strategy for teaching the Christian principle of forgiveness as she compares the death experiences of two different literary characters. Additional references to Christian doctrines pepper the lesson when the religious backgrounds of the two authors appear in their biographical sketches and when the choices the protagonists make in their separate death experiences determine the resolution of each story.

Examining carefully chosen thematic selections from different literary genres can help students to view moral and ethical issues from various perspectives; consequently, some of life’s most vital questions and debates become the focus of class discussions and writing assignments. Incorporating Christian values and morals into thematic writing prompts for personal essays and literature-based essays encourages students to examine the world around them to learn how to make better choices for themselves and for the other people affected by those same choices.

Examples of positive results reported by schools and colleges requiring students to take introductory courses focusing on the importance of making better choices will prove that classes addressing the formation of positive values do make a difference in students' attitudes and actions. To no one's surprise, students with teachers who care as much, if not more, about the student as a whole are the students who make the most progress in their educational pursuits as well as in their general self-image and sense of being productive members of society.

Leo Denton, University of Mobile **"Integrating Christian Faith and Works into the Classroom with Service Learning"**

This proposed presentation will examine service learning as a pedagogical opportunity to address particular needs of youth, universities, civic organizations, and churches. The presentation will describe service learning, its demonstrated benefits, recognized best practices in a Christian context, and a Spring 2010 service-learning experience at the University of Mobile.

College students often feel pressured to pursue an education to obtain a good job. This practical pursuit is accompanied by a wide variety of more transcendent student pursuits. While many churches and organizations want to provide more intellectual formation, service opportunities, and mentoring to assist the youth in their practical and transcendent pursuits, these groups often lack interactive bridges with youth that could facilitate this assistance in a sustained manner. Universities, which do interact with students for extended, concentrated time frames, find that youth often see academics as abstract and disconnected from life. Christian universities, moreover, find that students often see faith-based studies as obsolete or irrelevant. Even Christian universities that make significant efforts to impart Christian values may find that students and faculty perceive these efforts as peripheral to the real work of the university.

Service learning is a form of experiential learning where students as part of their coursework seek to address specific community needs while acquiring and applying specific course skills. Service learning has been practiced in almost every field of learning and at all levels of education from kindergarten through graduate studies. Educational research indicates that service learning enhances student engagement, motivation, self-esteem, test scores, career exploration, civic responsibility, future volunteerism, personal and social skills, and leadership.

The revelation that each person is saved by grace through faith and that each person is created and called by God to accomplish good works (see Ephesians 2:8-10) provides a strong Christian context for service learning. This context, the Golden Rule, and other theological truths enhance five recognized best practices of service learning as follows:

- 1) Clearly align service-learning activities with course objectives, including integrated Christian values and principles;
- 2) Foster the students' voices in selecting, planning, implementing, and evaluating their service learning projects particularly in relation to the students' vocations in life;
- 3) Enrich the students' experience of service and their ongoing reflection about their service to foster a commitment to personal competence; an appreciation of the needs, beauty, and gifts of others; and a passion for work directed toward the common good and the glory of God;
- 4) Observe, encourage, and mentor students in their service; and
- 5) Establish ongoing partnerships between universities, churches, civic organizations, and professionals to support quality learning experiences.

Service learning benefits youths, universities, and various community groups. Youths gain valuable experiences addressing real-life needs while obtaining an education that develops job-related and community-related skills. Universities connect and engage students, churches, civic organizations, and professionals to improve learning experiences. Churches and civic organizations involve and inspire more skilled volunteers. Together everyone builds stronger and more connected communities.

David M. DiQuattro, Grove City College
“The Virtues of a Liberal Education: An Augustinian Approach”

One charge that could be leveled against teaching and attempting to inculcate the virtues within a liberal arts education is that such an education would *presuppose* rather than rationally defend such a stance, which is antithetical to a liberal education which seeks understanding through free and rational inquiry. I argue on the contrary that the virtues are the character traits necessary to bring the activities of rational inquiry of a liberal education to completion in knowledge and understanding. Further, if some understanding of the virtues and attempt to cultivate them is not the starting point of liberal education, then the goals of rational inquiry cannot be achieved. Why do I say this?

It is a commonplace that contemporary academic discourse is compartmentalized and therefore fragmented. The result of this fragmentation has been widespread incommensurability of different standpoints and conclusions which are radically underdetermined by the reasons adduced for them.

This state of affairs makes it difficult for the academy to sustain the pursuit of its intellectual ideal of understanding reality as a whole, while at the same time it allows for established interests within the academy to become entrenched. In situations where widespread incommensurability obtains, it is possible to establish conventions of discourse which make dissenting viewpoints *unstable* within the established conventions of discourse. It also allows for application of academic inquiries to various practical questions, where the basis of such applications cannot be rationally vindicated against rival standpoints (because of incommensurability and underdetermination). In short, the fragmentation of knowledge enables knowledge to be put in the service of the arbitrary will of some, rather than enabling us to subject our wills to the truth about reality.

It is inquiry into the virtues—particularly the virtues understood in an Augustinian manner—which resists the fragmentation of inquiry and the resultant subordination of inquiry to arbitrary (i.e., non-rationally defended) interests. For Augustine understood the human tendency to view objects in a compartmentalized way, rather than understanding their place within a proper whole, in order that one might *manipulate* those objects for one’s own arbitrary, self-aggrandizing purposes. It is this intrusion of the self-important will into inquiry that is the enemy of genuinely free, rational inquiry. We therefore need the virtues to overcome our tendency to view reality in a fragmented way. The virtues are precisely those traits that keep us from adopting partial, distorted standpoints that serve our interests against others.

We answer the initial charge by invoking, in a manner characteristic of Augustine, a deep irony about liberal learning. It is only by *presupposing* a perspective—the standpoint of the virtues—as a starting point of inquiry that we will be able to overcome the compartmentalized and fragmented and hence limited and distorting perspectives which threaten to undermine the goals of liberal learning. Or to put it another way, liberal learning must consist of faith seeking understanding.

Marianne Peracchio DiQuattro, University of Notre Dame
“Lessons Learned in the Notre Dame Academic Freedom Debate”

Prior to last year’s scandal over the conferral of an honorary degree to President Obama, the newly inducted university president Fr. John Jenkins was enmeshed in another debate that stretched over months and had the entire campus in an uproar: would a Catholic institution such as the University of Notre Dame allow performances of Eve Ensler’s infamous play, *The Vagina Monologues*, to take place on a university stage? (It had been performed on campus prior to his presidency). The key word became the issue of “sponsorship,” and the faculty of various departments quickly took up the cause as an infringement on the academic freedom of the professors and departments who might wish to sponsor any performances. Concomitantly, the Notre Dame Queer Film Festival was also being told to change its name, as the word “festival” implies a sort of celebration of a lifestyle at odds with Catholic moral

teaching. The Film, Television, and Theater Department, sponsors of the festival, also became embroiled in the debate.

After months of public debates in both the school newspaper and in large forums for faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates, Fr. Jenkins handed down a compromise in which the university would not “sponsor” these events (*The Vagina Monologues* would not take place on a stage but in a classroom), their scope would be severely restricted (no fundraising for the local women’s shelters was to take place through ticket sales), and the events were to be structured as academic inquiries, to include panels of scholars and other guests to answer questions following every performance or film. A student-written play of monologues, based on extensive interviews, called “Her Loyal Daughters” would take place the next year to provide a space for the conversation about sexuality and relationships at Notre Dame (although the title became a source of conflict and would be changed, as it played on the figure of Our Lady and the Notre Dame fight song, which infamously only lauds “her loyal sons”).

This presentation seeks to lay out several lessons learned thanks to my involvement in this ongoing debate on several levels: as a colleague of the founder and director of the Notre Dame Queer Film Festival, my closeness to many of the undergraduate performers in *The Vagina Monologues*, my department’s involvement in the university-wide debate, and my choice to invite my First Year Composition students to research and write their argument papers on academic freedom. As a Christian scholar and teacher who works in the arts and literature, the issue of academic freedom within a Christian institution (whether Protestant or Catholic) requires me to consider how institutional concerns over Christian character should interact with departmental research and pedagogical needs. How should a debate such as this individual, scandalous event take place in a Christian institution? The Notre Dame case betrays strengths (a vigorous public debate that led to many fruitful discussions of academic freedom with students) and weaknesses (the nationwide questioning of Notre Dame’s Catholic character and the dissatisfying compromise).

Peter G. Epps, Belhaven University

“‘Reading maketh a full man’: Technology and the Marriage of Christianity to Humane Education”

It has become a commonplace to point out the radical shift in the meaning of “knowing” brought about by the popularization of the moveable-type printing press. Works such as David Lyle Jeffrey’s *People of the Book* further examine ways that readily available codices of Scripture and the notion of “my Bible” as a personal possession have changed the relationships of knowing, believing, and confessing within Christendom. When we look at this development through an educational lens, we can see that the readily available codex caused a radical shift in both the diffusion of learning among the population and the density of learning for every individual. What is perhaps less often remarked is the role of the focal unity of confession within Christendom in obtaining this result, a role which is not controverted but demonstrated in the intensity of Catholic/Protestant disputations in early modernity.

We must underscore the role of Christendom’s focal unity, however, in achieving the “both diffusion and density” result that has come to define the Liberal Arts and the University in our academic culture. Failing to do so leaves us with an incomplete understanding of the means and the meaning of technological transformations, a deficiency which threatens the very existence of real Humanities faculties in late modern post-secondary education systems. Such thinkers as Jacques Lyotard began outlining the changing meaning of “knowing” in the era of digital data well before the World Wide Web became first an item, and then an assumption, in the daily life of most Americans. Few would dispute the assertion that widespread Internet use is already having a comparable effect on the diffusion of learning; but in a society where the technology itself seems to be the only focal unity, it is difficult to see how one would achieve or define a “both diffusion and density” outcome. Insofar as “the education system” has become a technology-driven diffusion mechanism, in fact, it becomes incumbent on Christian educators to rethink their alliances with that mechanism, and seek constructive

ways to ally their interest in and skill with diffusive technology to concrete professional communities within and among which genuine density of learning can be propagated. This paper will conclude by suggesting a few parameters for such efforts.

Paul R. House, Samford University; C. Ben Mitchell, Union University; Gregory A. Thornbury, Union University; Richard A. Bailey, Canisius College
“Christianity, Virtue, and the Problem of a Liberal Arts Curriculum: Some Disciplinary Perspectives and Offerings”

As Christian scholars attempt to determine the extent to which their respective faith traditions ought to factor into their classrooms, they find themselves dealing with more than simply their faith traditions—as if those were not enough of a problem. They also must deal with the standards of one’s own discipline. This naturally makes the integration of faith and learning across the varied disciplines of a liberal arts curriculum even more difficult as scholars face a variety of problems posed by the orthodox practice of their own fields. One might even say that Christian scholars often face a series of competing orthodoxies, specifically, those of the historic Christian faith and those of their respective guilds. Such conflict is the focus of this panel discussion. Composed of scholars from a variety of disciplines, from biblical studies to theology to philosophy and ethics to history, this panel seeks to address some of the pressing issues facing the integration of faith, specifically Christianity, into the college classroom. By addressing the problems within their own disciplines, hopefully the discussants will be able to trace both the general and specific problems of faith and the tradition of scholarship within liberal arts universities, allowing for a conversation of the prospects for addressing these issues.

Marisa Humphrey, Central Washington University
“Incorporating Philosophies of the Liberal Arts into First-Year Composition Curriculum”

At a small state college, such as the one at which I teach, many students arrive as freshmen, thinking that they are attending college merely to acquire job skills, and they often criticize the courses in which they enroll as worthless wastes of time on the grounds that the courses are not applicable to their major or their intended job. In addition, professors routinely vent about students’ passive modes of learning or blasé attitudes toward topics which ought to be inherently valuable. If the recent proliferation of books such as Mark Bauerlein’s *The Dumbest Generation*, Maggie Jackson’s *Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age*, and Susan Jacoby’s *The Age of American Unreason* is any indication, the problem of passive education and indifference to valuable ideas has reached epidemic proportions. How, then, can instructors effectively demonstrate to skeptical students that the liberal arts specifically and education generally are still valuable? It would be ideal to engage skeptical students in discussions concerning the value of the arts as early as possible, namely, during their first year of classes. First-year composition courses create an excellent setting for opening that conversation and whetting the students’ appetites for the arts. The traditional student’s first year provides ideal timing because many incoming freshmen have to stop and reflect on their past educational experiences in order to learn to manage their collegiate academics. In order to succeed in their college education, they must confront their own philosophies concerning the value of education, philosophies which have already developed within the students’ minds. Further, at most colleges, students from a variety of different backgrounds, geographic regions, intended areas of study, and skill levels must enroll in first-year composition, allowing the composition instructor to help a diverse group of students to engage in questions pertaining to why education is important in the first place and specifically why the arts are worthy of attention, reflection, and serious study. This paper will present some of the methods which I have used over the past two years to engage first-year composition students in discussions concerning the value of the liberal arts and the purposes of higher education. The catalyst for these conversations has been a collection of articles which all discuss some aspect of education, such as reading, self-esteem, leisure time, vocational aims, technology, and instructional methods. As a result of these readings, my students have begun to challenge the master narratives which have made them skeptical about the value of the liberal arts and the value of education. By

merely playing the role of moderator in the discussion of these articles, I have witnessed students declaring that they intend to read more, pursue their interests in the humanities, and, perhaps most importantly, engage in their educations actively rather than passively. Despite Stanley Fish's dictum that composition instructors should save the world on their own time, first-year composition classes provide an ideal place for students to engage in discussions which require them to consider their motives for pursuing higher education.

Jason Jewell, Faulkner University

“Western Cultural Heritage: Faulkner University’s Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching the Liberal Arts”

In 2004, Faulkner University’s administration decided to revamp a significant portion of the school’s undergraduate core curriculum, making it more interdisciplinary. Courses in Western Civilization, English literature, and fine arts appreciation were eliminated from the catalogue and replaced with a chronologically organized, three-course sequence titled Western Cultural Heritage, which became part of the degree plan of almost every Faulkner undergraduate student beginning in 2005.

This presentation will summarize the philosophical and religious motives behind the curricular change, discuss the methods that have been used to implement the new curriculum, and explore the successes and challenges of this interdisciplinary approach. Finally, it will offer some suggestions for future efforts in humanities and liberal arts instruction at the Christian university.

The motives for the introduction of interdisciplinary courses include the Christian belief in the unity of learning: “All truth is God’s truth.” A major goal of the new courses was to address the fragmentation of curriculum that has become so common in higher education. Even in traditional liberal arts colleges, students frequently get only bits and pieces of the essential story of Western culture. For example, a student may be required to take either music appreciation, art appreciation, or theater appreciation, and in getting exposure to only one of these three fields is deprived of personal enrichment from the other two.

The Western Cultural Heritage courses are taught by professors with interdisciplinary backgrounds or co-taught by professors with specialties in the various disciplines (philosophy, history, music, literature, etc.) covered in the course content. The courses utilize the most high-tech classroom on the campus, and the administration approved special purchases of high-end audio-visual equipment to maximize the potential for in-class presentations of videos of drama, opera, etc. Professors self-consciously incorporate Christian content, such as discussions of the theology of art or Biblical critiques of cultures, into each lecture.

This approach to liberal arts instruction has enjoyed several successes and encountered several challenges. Undoubtedly, Faulkner’s curriculum has become much more self-consciously Christian as a result of this course sequence. Building on the implementation of the Western Cultural Heritage courses, other areas of the university’s core curriculum have been restructured along similar lines in the last two years. Students much more easily see the connections among the content of various disciplines under the new format. Challenges include the resistance of accrediting bodies, institutions to which Faulkner students wish to transfer their credits, and even some among Faulkner’s own faculty to this “outside-the-box” curriculum. Additionally, finding an appropriate textbook for classroom instruction has been difficult. Our future plans include writing our own textbook customized to the course, doing diagnostic testing to identify students lacking in cultural literacy for possible remediation, and continuing our efforts to ensure Christianity informs everything we teach in this sequence.

T.J. Mashburn, University of Mobile
“Critical Thinking, the Classroom, and Christianity”

This paper deals with the intersection of Christianity and the academy/the classroom. Specifically, what happens or what should happen when critical thinking is brought to bear on the claims of the Christian message?

We begin by asking, what is critical thinking? In the Western tradition, critical thinking begins with the systematic curiosity of the pre-Socratic philosophers who addressed some of the following questions: What is real? How did we get here? What governs the world? What is the best way to live? How do I know? Socrates, through the writings of Plato, develops this kind of wonder into an art, the so-called “Socratic method.” This type of reasoning and examination (elenchus) is outlined. The real merit of Greek thought lies not only in the questions raised but in the ways in which traditional answers were questioned. That is to say, critical thinking is always prepared to question or to interrogate tradition.

Next, the contribution to critical thinking of Rene Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, is considered. His famous four rules of inquiry are identified and defined: the rule of evidence—never to accept anything as true without sufficient evidence; the rule of analysis—divide each of the difficulties into as many parts as possible in order to understand and to resolve them better; the rule of logic—direct thoughts in an orderly manner, by beginning with the simplest and most easily known and ascending step by step to knowledge of the more complex; and the rule of comprehensiveness—make the examination so complete as to leave nothing out.

While recognizing that lines between science and religion, reason and faith have been drawn, perhaps too exclusively since the 17th/18th centuries, the writings of Blaise Pascal are considered as a moderating position. The real merit of Pascal’s work lies in the fact that he knew the power of science and utilized it, even while recognizing its limitations. Several of the *Pensees* are used to illustrate the way Pascal understands the workings of faith and reason.

The paper concludes with a series of questions, perhaps best addressed in the classroom (the safest place to reflect on the most dangerous ideas) but certainly not limited to it. Is there a difference between the religion of Jesus and the Jesus of religion? Was Christ a Christian, Luther a Lutheran, Calvin a Calvinist? What about truth in other religions? Does God love good acts because they are good? Or, are acts good because God loves them? These and other questions illustrate the way in which critical thinking about Christianity ought to proceed. The answers are not nearly as important as the questions.

Ken Millen-Penn, Fairmont State University
“Using History to Teach Ethics and Christian Values: Slavery and the Social Gospel Movement in American History”

Values, including Christian values, can and should be taught in secular colleges and state universities, though doing such can present some interesting problems, obstacles, and complications. First, there is always the potentially thorny problem of the separation of church and state, though this has not been a major issue at many institutions of higher education, as academic freedom still holds. Second, a more basic fundamental obstacle has to do with an over-secularized, value-absent, American society which contains young people quite oblivious to any moral teaching, let alone the most basic elements of Christian teachings/values. Third, teaching values, particularly Christian values, in American history classes, as I do, presents complications, seeing that Christianity has been used throughout American history not only for social good, but also social evil.

Teaching American history allows, some may argue requires, a foray into explicating Christianity and its values. Whether one is discussing the religious origins of a number of the original thirteen colonies, the reform movements engendered by the First and Second Great Awakenings, slavery and the

abolitionist movement, the Social Gospel Movement, imperialism, the Cold War against communism, or the Civil Rights movement, Christianity and its values must become part of the dialogue as one cannot understand these events and happenings without it. Of course, when Christianity is used to perpetuate social evils or greed, as it was with slavery, imperialism, or segregation, then the moral teachings of Christianity seem to be laden with contradiction. Yet, it is exactly this contradiction that demands the teaching of Christian values in history, specifically, and the liberal arts generally.

This paper will, first, examine two key issues in American history, slavery and the social gospel movement, and show how Christianity and its values were employed by both supporters and opponents of the issues; it will show how both sides used the Bible and Christian-based arguments to make their arguments. Second, this paper will argue that in discussing these issues one perforce requires classroom awareness/discussion of ethics, values, and socially applied Christianity. Lastly, it will suggest ways that other disciplines can incorporate history into their subject as a vehicle to teach ethics/values, including Christian ethics/values.

Douglas Mitchell, University of Mobile

“Turning in the In-Between: Reconsidering the Moral Nature of Poetry”

When we speak of values in a liberal arts setting, often we are talking about using texts to illustrate various values (tolerance, forgiveness, etc.) and using classroom discussion to deal with the importance of those values. It is easy for literature to get lost in the process, or (worse) to become an artifact illustrating various ‘life situations.’

Literature at its best is a training of the moral sense. This training is not simply a matter of discerning right versus wrong action, but the meaning of action as such, as a response to the whole of reality—action in response to a world that has meaning, though the precise nature of that meaning is often opaque.

Poetry is not statement, but enactment. What I would like to explore is the notion of the poem as moral space and the importance of restoring a sense of moral space for today’s students.

I will introduce the idea of moral space through Charles Taylor, then turn to the larger Platonic notion of the metaxy as treated by the political philosopher Eric Voegelin. The metaxy is the tension toward the ground of Being. It is not simply another object of thought; this tension, for Voegelin, is constitutive of consciousness itself. This understanding restores the dynamism to the life of intellect. It gives us a way to talk about the motions of the soul in response to divine drawing, as we move in a world of discrete things.

Applied to literature (and to poetry especially), this recovery from classical political philosophy shifts the conversation from objects and statements to experience, to motions of the soul. Using Hopkins and Eliot, I will illustrate what these dynamics look like within the experience of the poem.

Eric S. Nyrose, Alberta Bible College

“What’s Faith Got to Do with It?: The Role of Faith in Theological Research”

There were two opportunities to present a text from the Christian scriptures, Ephesians 5:22-33, which discusses the concept of a wife submitting to her husband, something controversial in contemporary discussions. It was presented first in a faith-based college where discussion was engaged, animated, controversial, and serious. This group intended to apply the text to their lives, so it made a big difference. This same information was later presented at a university class called Women and Families in the Graeco-Roman World where there was no discussion. To them, it was simply historical facts about the ideals for marriage in primitive Christianity. It had no bearing on their lives.

The study of theology, or its counterpart, religious studies, has been going on in one way or the other for centuries. Theological libraries or something like them have also been present for a long time. However, rather little has been written on the information seeking characteristics of these students and scholars. This gap in the literature was verified by Michels (2005) in his study of how biblical scholars used people as information resources. Milas (2008) has started down this road with an analysis of the acknowledgements in theological dissertations. Just recently Penner (2009) undertook a literature review of the information behavior of theologians. Still there is little, if any, attention given to what role faith might play in the process. Fry (2006) notes that there is an emerging recognition of the need to look at the variables of individual researchers—to consider their context. Theological research involves all the academic rigor of the humanities but is done in a context of values, the recognition of a divine authority, and reliance on a faith community. This does not need to limit the research but could shape it. Theological researchers do not just want to know the information. They want to understand what difference it might make in their lives and the lives of those in their faith community. Furthermore, they are looking for resources to help them with the practical implications of their theology—resources for preaching, worship, and pastoral care. While some religious studies students may also have faith, it is usually supposed that their information seeking behavior follows similar patterns to other humanities students (Michels, 2008).

There will be two methods of information gathering: individual interviews with theology students at faith-based colleges and research logs by students at a faith-based seminary or divinity school. In both cases the questions will include: What types of resources did you use? How, if at all, have you relied on other people in your research? What effect, if any, has your faith/preconceptions had on how you researched or what you did with your research? Does your faith affect your research or is your research simply an academic pursuit? How did you deal with discoveries which did not line up with your faith? Was there any way in which your faith community affected how you dealt with your research? Notes will be taken from the interviews and research logs. These data will then be coded into a table and analyzed looking for emerging trends and behaviors. Some of the data will be more quantifiable while other data will be qualitative in nature. It is anticipated that this study will find several commonalities between students of religious studies and theology, but it is hoped that new insights will be discovered regarding the influence of faith on students in faith-based contexts. In the end we may find that a theological librarian is one who should be thoroughly grounded in the academic rigor and critical thinking of higher education yet also shares, or at least understands, the values and faith of the seminary or college in which he or she works.

Farrell O’Gorman, DePaul University

“Selves that Learn to Believe: The Education of Walker Percy (and Others)”

I will reflect on the questions which the conference seeks to address in light of my particular background. I completed graduate study in English and have experience at a variety of institutions, but in 2007 I gladly joined a new Catholic Studies department at a university which is seeking new ways to maintain its historically Catholic identity.

In our efforts to establish a coherent curriculum, my colleagues and I confront the fact that we are trained in distinct disciplines (e.g., theology, history, English, political science). Yet we want a curriculum that is interdisciplinary rather than multidisciplinary, and one that presents Catholicism compellingly to a diverse body of students who see that faith presented very critically elsewhere in our university. One strategy that I find increasingly attractive in meeting this goal is organizing courses in relation to the lives of individual figures who are representative of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

A part of me wants to reject this approach as somehow hopelessly old-fashioned—akin to the “great man” theory of history, etc. And as a scholar of literature, I have always tended to de-emphasize biographical contexts and simplistic biographical readings of fiction. Yet I have always realized that the writers who have meant the most to me are in fact those writers whose lives and non-fiction I find

most deeply compelling. And I believe that students are deeply interested in learning about the lives—not just the ideas—of major authors.

Inevitably, the stories of such figures are stories of *education*: stories of formal education in the classroom, to some degree, but also of self-education (or providential education?). As often as not the latter occurs in reaction or contrast to the former. This general rule holds true with regard to figures as diverse as St. Augustine, Cardinal Newman, and Dorothy Day, but I would like to focus the second half of my presentation primarily on the education of just one figure: Walker Percy. Always interested in literature, Percy earned his B.A. in chemistry and completed medical school before beginning a self-directed education in philosophy and theology. Thus Percy in a sense lived out answers to the following questions (as well as writing about them in his essays):

- * How should we address the moral and intellectual fragmentation of the postmodern student and/or teacher?
- * What is the value of a liberal arts education, as distinguished from mere technical competence or credentialed job security? And how can that value be demonstrated to skeptical students?
- * What specific values can be taught through a specific discipline, such as literature, the sciences, or philosophy?

In addition to stressing the curricular context in which I am considering these issues, then, my presentation will 1) briefly consider Percy's answers to the specific questions listed above, and 2) consider more generally how studying *individuals* like Percy in a more *holistic* fashion might help us to think properly about values and character formation in the liberal arts classroom.

Sabrina Parton and Rick Johnson, Shorter University **“Promotion of Higher-Level Skills through Character Education: Shorter University’s General Education Requirement”**

One purpose of a Christian liberal arts institution is to provide a foundation for lifelong success. While this includes traditional higher-level skills such as critical thinking, communication, group processes, and interpretation of data, the context for acquisition of these skills has been limited to discipline-specific programs and is often absent the discussion of current events and ethical issues as experienced with the challenges in life. Secular institutions boast of teaching ethical responsibility or citizenship, but in a postmodern context. The Christian liberal arts institution is unique in that it should seek ways to require all students, regardless of major program of study, to achieve higher-level skills through the Christian worldview as applied to life’s challenges. The Lord commands that we are to love the Lord with all our mind, heart, and soul and that we are to do our best, to work as if working for the Lord, not man. One intentional avenue integrating faith and learning of higher-level skills is through a general education core course, Character Education, as implemented at Shorter University. Christianity, or character, are not addendums to life, rather, they are lenses with which students should view their lives, professionally and personally. The purpose of this presentation is to describe the required general education course, HPE 2510: Character Education, and its impact on internal and external constituencies of Shorter University. Part I will define the Christian liberal arts institution’s responsibility in implementing character education. Part II will describe Shorter University’s Character Education curriculum in relation to the attainment of higher-level skills through experiential learning. Part III will examine Character Education courses at a selection of other institutions, and Part IV will offer some suggestions for creating Character Education courses at those institutions currently lacking such programs.

Geoffrey Reiter, Baptist College of Florida

“The Christian Faith and Classroom Moral Vocabulary, or Why Adolf Hitler Was Not Just a Misunderstood Landscape Artist”

As a teacher in an eighth-grade Language Arts class at a public charter school, I encountered an intelligent young student whose stated desire was to restore the artistic reputation of Adolf Hitler, who had been rejected by art school before pursuing other career options. While this student’s interests were problematic in the extreme, I found it difficult to articulate my objections in the vocabulary of the public school classroom. Though public school environments often target character education as part of their curriculum, the basis for the state’s definitions of character, morality, or values often remains ill-defined. This paper seeks to explore the significance of religious faith, and in particular the Christian faith, in defining and articulating moral instruction and character formation in the classroom. It will also pose the question of how—or if—Christian teachers in public or non-religious private school settings can fulfill their own convictions and vocations in the absence of a Christian moral vocabulary.

Richard Rankin Russell, Baylor University

“Academic Freedom in the English Classroom at Baylor University: The Example of Graham Swift’s *Waterland*”

As a tenured English professor at Baylor University, an historically Baptist university that has become more ecumenical in recent years, I have sometimes struggled with academic freedom in the classroom. I believe I can teach anything I deem appropriate for a class, yet have sometimes encountered students who have balked at reading specific works—Harold Pinter’s *Betrayal* and Graham Swift’s *Waterland* both come to mind. In both of these cases, I have defended teaching the work under consideration to the student because I believe they are rich, disturbing works that teach us more about being human generally and how to value each other as human beings specifically. Because of my interest in *Waterland*, I have written and published an essay on it as a confessional novel (*Papers on Language and Literature*, Spring 2009) that portrays how the narrator, historian Tom Crick, escapes to the professional study of the French Revolution in order to suppress narrating his involvement in three deaths the fateful summer of 1943. My insistence on what I term Tom’s “incarnational” view of history and exploration of an ending that has eschatological reverberations has opened up rich possibilities for discussion in both the undergraduate and graduate classrooms about a novel that frankly discusses sex and even portrays a graphic abortion. In the spring of 2010, one of my best current graduate students wrote a publishable term paper on the role of savior figures in the novel that used my reclamation of a seminal figure in the novel, the neglected student named Price, as a springboard to a discussion of a whole series of such characters. In this paper, I will discuss briefly my past undergraduate students’ refusal to read sections of the novel and my graduate student’s just-completed seminar on the novel that continues a line of research that I and a few others have endeavored to create to reclaim the novel as ethical from postmodernist critics who have largely read it as an example of historiographic metafiction. Because of Baylor’s Baptist heritage that has traditionally insisted on the priesthood of the believer and because academic freedom has been consistently defended there, I believe that the climate there encouraged me to teach a novel like *Waterland* that has been both a source of frustration to at least one student and an inspiration to others. Overall, this novel has led to the most open and honest discussions on abortion and salvation I have ever helped lead in the liberal arts classroom.

Robert M. Schaefer, University of West Georgia

“When Worldviews Collide: Religion, Philosophy, and Politics in the Modern World”

Mark Lilla, in *The Stillborn God*, reminds us that modern political philosophy, born a short four hundred years ago, attempted to solve the tension between politics and religion. It did, but only in the West, and only for a short period of time. In fact, the experiment fell apart in Europe as witnessed by the tragic events of the 20th century. Regardless of the effort to secularize politics, it is clear that religion

and politics cannot be wholly separated. We ought to learn why the United States separated religion from politics and how unusual this is, but doing so requires a serious understanding of our intellectual and religious traditions.

This issue becomes all the more important when we attempt to comprehend the current war on terror. This war, at its core, is really about a fundamental disagreement about religion and its relationship to the city. Consequently the liberal arts must educate future leaders about the world and how the West is historically different from all other countries. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon Christian colleges to teach their students that the West consists of three very different traditions—the Greco-Roman, Christian, and modernity. The future of the Christian West and who we are as a people depends upon our comprehension of our philosophic, political, and religious roots.

Stephen J. Schuler, University of Mobile
“The Value of Literature to Christians: A Conversation with C.S. Lewis”

When I first came across C. S. Lewis’s 1940 essay on “Christianity and Culture,” I began reading with high hopes. I knew Lewis as a fiction writer, a Christian apologist, and a first-rate literary critic on Medieval and Renaissance literature, and I thought that surely a man as well-informed and erudite as Lewis would be able to offer a cogent defense of the value of English literature for the twentieth-century Christian. Much to my surprise, Lewis offers no such defense. In opposition to I. A. Richards and Matthew Arnold, Lewis traces Christian attitudes towards “culture” or the “arts,” with special attention to poetry, from St. Paul through Augustine, Aquinas, and John Henry Newman, pointing out that most of these figures (Newman excepted) place a notably low value on the arts, and he concludes that the arts do not, in themselves, improve one’s spiritual condition. One of his dominant concerns is whether he, as an individual Christian, is morally justified in spending his life in the study and teaching of the arts, and while he concludes that his profession is allowable, he also strongly suggests that there is nothing inherently noble or edifying about the study of the arts. I wish to engage with some of Lewis’s claims and attempt to answer some of his doubts about the spiritual value of his profession. First, I argue that Lewis’s fiction, not to mention his apologetics, would have been impossible without his training as a literary critic. Secondly, I argue that even if we take seriously Lewis’s characterization of the arts as elements of leisure, Christianity itself has always placed significant importance on resting from work, which seems to include elements of leisure, and I will use some ideas from W. H. Auden to expand on Lewis’s suggestion that it may be acceptable to rest “in the suburbs of Jerusalem.” I will also engage with Lewis’s description of the arts as “schoolmasters,” and draw an analogy between the arts and the Mosaic law as described by St. Paul in Galatians 3:24, noting the inherent dangers in both “schoolmasters.” I will conclude by examining the ways in which I believe the study of the arts is not only helpful for the spiritual life as Augustine suggested, but even in some sense necessary as Hugh of St. Victor argued, not as a spiritual good in itself, but as necessary secondary good that is nevertheless a prerequisite to primary goods.

John E. Shaffett, Baptist College of Florida
“Faith and Reason through the Centuries: Revisiting Tertullian’s Question”

“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?” This paper attempts to answer the question posed by Tertullian so many years ago. It does this by describing the historical interactions between the city of faith and the city of reason. How has the church interacted with the liberal arts? Are there any lessons we can learn from this interaction? The paper takes us on a historical journey beginning with Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. It analyses the thinking of Clement and Tertullian. It tells us about the Alexandrian School and its emphasis on the unity of truth. Augustine’s thinking on the relationship between faith and reason is also described. It looks at his idea of spoiling the Egyptians. The paper then looks at the interactions of Christianity during the Middle Ages. First it describes the monastic and cathedral schools of the Early Middle Ages. It analyses its emphasis on character formation and love of God. Then it analyses the different

responses to the invasion of the Greek writings of Aristotle. Some thought it should be banned; others thought it should be accepted with certain reservations. The thinking of Thomas Aquinas is emphasized in this section. The next section covers two thinkers of the Reformation period: Martin Luther and John Calvin. It analyses the Protestant reformers' emphasis on the usefulness of the liberal arts. Francis Bacon is next examined with his emphasis on the scientific method and inductive learning. John Henry Newman's great work on the university—*The Idea of a University*—is analyzed for ideas on the relationship between the church and the liberal arts. The last individual to be examined is C. S. Lewis. What ideas can be gleaned from his writings on the interaction between faith and learning? Is scholarship a Christian calling? The paper concludes with reflections on the interactions between Christianity and the liberal arts. Is there still a need for liberal arts education? Are Christianity and the liberal arts compatible? What about censorship? What about some of the key educational issues in the 21st century: career education, technology, and the fragmentation of knowledge?

Chad P. Stutz, University of Mobile

“Some Thoughts towards an ‘Adequate Theology of Failure’ for the Christian Liberal Arts Classroom”

Even at the most prestigious colleges and universities, academic failure is a reality for many undergraduate students. Though the reasons for failure vary widely (lack of sufficient preparation, poor study habits, ineffective teaching, etc.), the psychological impact—ranging from temporary anxiety to serious doubts about long-term professional goals—can be profound. Teachers, moreover, often find themselves in a difficult position. On the one hand, they must assess student achievement according to the intellectual standards established by individual institutions and disciplines—an obligation that often contributes to the perception that they are the *cause* of student failure. On the other hand, teachers must also help students cope with and make sense of their failures. As Leah Blatt Glasser argues in a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “We must,” paradoxically, “teach students to fail well.”

In this paper, I will suggest that educators at Christian liberal arts colleges might better help their students to “fail well” by encouraging them to think theologically about failure. Numerous psychological studies have yielded important insights into the relationship between failure and such concepts as self-esteem and self-efficacy. My approach, however, while it reflects a similar interest in the psychological consequences of failure, will be predominantly historical and theological. Indeed, my main objective is to lay the groundwork for what might be called, borrowing a phrase from Barbara Brown Taylor, “an adequate theology of failure” for the contemporary Christian liberal arts classroom.

An adequate theology of failure must, first, articulate a clear and distinctively Christian definition of “success.” This is a vital starting point since much of the anxiety associated with student failure is arguably the result of an uncritical acceptance of widespread cultural notions of success that are at odds with Christianity. Second, an adequate theology of failure must take seriously the doctrine of God's sovereignty. A robust understanding of this doctrine enables one to locate moments of failure within a protracted process of intellectual and spiritual growth. Third, an adequate theology of failure must emphasize the inevitability of failure as a consequence of humankind's fallen condition. While acknowledging fallenness does not excuse failure, it underscores the fact that failure is a recurring feature in all human efforts and that therefore true success is rarely attained without it. Moreover, it suggests the need for transparency on the part of both teachers and students. Fourth, an adequate theology of failure requires that both students and teachers alike must be open to the possibility that an instance of academic failure is in fact a species of *moral* failure. As uncomfortable as it may seem to some, thinking about academic failure theologically necessitates a thoughtful consideration of the moral implications of education as a form of Christian obedience. Finally, an adequate theology of failure must advocate a rigorously scriptural understanding of perseverance. By teaching students to think theologically about failure, Christian educators may better equip them to confront their shortcomings within a more meaningful framework of values that moves beyond the tradition of folk

wisdom which some instructors instinctively fall back on when attempting to help students understand their failures (e.g., “what doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger” or “if at first you don’t succeed”).

Brad M. Swiger, University of Mobile

“Promoting Critical Thought and Academic Freedom among Biology Students: The Intersection of Faith and Reason”

It is well known regarding the natural sciences that objectivity is considered a top priority. It is also well known that many scientists consider science and reason to be at odds with faith and religion. For the biology professor who works within the Christian worldview, it would appear to be an insurmountable problem to find reconciliation between the “facts” of biology and the “facts” of Christianity when teaching the student body. Despite the putative discontinuity between science and religion, Christianity must be shown to be competent in the intellectual marketplace. This is the first task of a biologist in the classroom. The second is more methodological in nature. The professor must be capable of stimulating critical thinking among the students regarding controversial subject matter. It is in no one’s best interest if the student merely gains a bulleted list of ideas and theories regarding points of stasis between competing ideas. They must be capable of interacting with these ideas. In addition, the professor must generate and maintain an environment that allows the student to discuss, promote, and defend his or her views regarding such issues. It is incumbent upon believing professors to show students that Christianity is a logical worldview and that we are willing to discuss all sides of academic controversies, yet remain steadfast in the face of “philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition” (Col. 2:8).

Michael R. Young, Faulkner University

“Teaching and Learning as a Spiritual Discipline: The Educational Philosophy of Hugh of St. Victor”

The teaching and learning program as conceived by the 12th century monk, Hugh of St. Victor, holds out the promise of two possible achievements for the modern Christian University: one, a clear vision of the unity and purpose of all learning; and two, an understanding of education as an exercise of spiritual discipline toward spiritual formation.

Portrayed primarily in his *Didascalicon*, Hugh’s anthropology and psychology highlights his envisioned purpose, content, and means of learning within his theological framework. The purpose of learning is seen as the “highest curative in life” for the fallen creature. It is nothing less than a restoration of the human being to his divine likeness. Hugh cites two elements in learning that allude to the content of education, namely, contemplation and the practice of the virtues. He outlines the four steps that lead just men toward a future perfection: study, meditation, prayer, and performance, with a fifth step of contemplation that is “a sort of fruit of the preceding steps.” The practice of the virtues for leaning requires first being graced with humility so as to develop “spiritual eyes,” including the eye of the flesh that sees outside itself to see the natural world; the eye of reason which sees inside itself into the soul and the human spirit; and the eye of contemplation which sees God. By means of these “spiritual eyes” and the fifth step of contemplation, Hugh admonishes the student to “[L]earn everything . . . nothing is superfluous. Skimpy knowledge is not a pleasing thing.”

Hugh’s pedagogical methodology touts the value of memorization of basic content within the various disciplines as a way to order the mind. He, along with Richard of St. Victor, created elaborate and theologically comprehensive verbal and pictorial mnemonic devices. The use of memorization was not for the mere recitation of facts, but rather, as Mary Carruthers has so powerfully demonstrated in her works, *The Book of Memory* and *The Craft of Thought*, the medieval practice of *memoria* included “the essential roles of emotion, imagination, and cognition within the activity of recollection.” With this full bore operation of the mind’s reason, heart, and creative imagination in the practice of memorization, Hugh asserts a student is thus enabled to see texts and the creation as symbols or windows that mirror

or open up to knowing the soul and God. Hence, all learning is not only united in God but it also provides a means to come to know Him existentially as well as cognitively.

With Hugh's highly suggestive pedagogy, this study will suggest a few creative possibilities for building a conceptual framework to unite not only the academic disciplines but unite teaching and learning with the task of spiritual formation.