

The Postmodern Opportunity: Christians in the Academy

By Harold Heie

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Two major contemporary tendencies form the background for this essay. The first is the postmodern epistemological turn toward perspectivalism—the view that our claims to knowledge unavoidably reflect our particular perspectives as members of different interpretive communities. The second tendency is for persons from different interpretive communities to be unable to talk authentically to each other about their differing perspectives or knowledge claims. They often ignore each other; they sometimes shout each other down; they even hit or kill each other at times; but they seldom talk to each other in a manner that will help each to learn from the other.

My purpose in this essay is to argue that a proper understanding of the legitimate insights of the first postmodern epistemological tendency toward perspectivalism can provide a window of opportunity for overcoming the second tendency toward non-conversation. In particular, I will argue that our contemporary situation can afford an opportunity to create forums for cross-perspectival conversation that will enable Christian perspectives to be heard in the academy, and I will propose certain ideals for conversation that will foster productive conversation. I will conclude with some concrete suggestions for how the Christian academy can model a community of conversation and then invite members of the larger academy to join the conversation.

I. The Problem: We're Not Talking

A marvelous example of the conversation I call for in this essay is provided in the book *Let's Talk: An Honest Conversation on Critical Issues*.¹ In this slim volume, Dr. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon general, and Dr. Timothy Johnson, ABC News

In this essay, Harold Heie argues that the postmodern emphasis on perspectivalism can provide a window of opportunity for Christian voices to be heard in the academy. He proposes a postmodern conversation process that includes a diversity of voices. But such cross-perspectival conversation will be fruitful only if members of the academy aspire to certain ideals for conversation. Rather than arguing for such ideals in the abstract, Heie provides concrete suggestions for how Christian colleges can model communities of conversation and then invite non-Christian scholars to join the conversation. Mr. Heie is Director of the Center for Christian Studies at Gordon College.

Medical Editor, dialogue about complex issues in medical ethics that have led to much strident public debate: abortion, euthanasia, AIDS and health care. They demonstrate that deeply committed Christians can disagree on important issues with honesty, openness and kindness. In their own words:

We have come to respect and love each other even as we have learned that we disagree on many specific subjects relating to medical ethics. However, we both acknowledge that we have learned from each other, and that we have grown in our understanding of the human condition because of each other. We also agree that too often persons of opposing viewpoints conclude that there is room in God's love for only one of them. We write this book to demonstrate otherwise; to suggest that it is possible to disagree, sometimes vigorously, and yet acknowledge that God loves us all even while we are all less than perfect in this human pilgrimage.²

But is the Christian community ready for such honest conversation? The outlook is not promising. As reported in *Christianity Today*,³ some Christians in New England didn't want Dr. Johnson even to present his views on medical ethics, a possible first step toward conversation. When he was invited to speak to the New England Association of Evangelicals, a church group threatened to picket the meeting because they didn't agree with some of the positions Dr. Johnson took regarding abortion and euthanasia. And so to avoid confrontation and possible bad press for the association, Dr. Johnson graciously withdrew from this speaking engagement. What a tragedy! Because other Christians disagreed with this highly respected Christian doctor, they silenced him. They rejected the kind invitation extended by Drs. Koop and Johnson in the preface of their book: "We hope that if you disagree, you will learn from each other's viewpoints, and respect those who differ with you. Let's talk."⁴

This incident is not a rare exception. I detect an increasing tendency for Christians who disagree with each other to not be able to talk about their disagreements. The tragedy is not that Christians disagree with each other on some critical issues.⁵ The tragedy is that we often find it difficult to talk about our disagreements so that we can learn from each other. All too often, dialogue has been replaced by monologue. Conversation has been replaced by contestation.

If the problem of Christians not adequately talking to each other is formidable, it may be minuscule compared to the problem of Christians and non-Christians not being able to talk adequately to one another, which is the ultimate problem addressed in this essay. As noted by Stephen L. Carter in his book *The Culture of*

¹C. Everett Koop and Timothy Johnson, *Let's Talk: An Honest Conversation on Critical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

²*Ibid.*, 7-8.

³*Christianity Today*, 8 March 1993, 58.

⁴C. Everett Koop and Timothy Johnson, 9.

⁵I have argued elsewhere that our acknowledgement of such disagreements between Christians can be an important step toward quality Christian higher education if we orchestrate means for conversing about our differing viewpoints. See H. Heie, "Wanted: Christian Colleges for a Dynamic Evangelicalism" (hereafter "Wanted"), *Christian Scholar's Review* XXI:3 (March 1992): 268-274.

Disbelief,⁶ this latter problem is especially acute if the topic of discussion bears on politics or public policy matters. The fear, which is certainly not unfounded, is that religious people wish to impose their religious beliefs on others.⁷ Therefore, we can take our Christianity or other religion seriously in private (relegating God to the status of a "hobby"), but Christian voices are suspect in discussions of public policy issues. George Marsden makes a similar observation concerning the reluctance of the academy to include Christian voices. He suggests that when scholars at the university "hear evangelical or conservative Christian" they often "hear anti-abortion, anti-feminism, anti-gay rights," and the fear that such politically charged issues may be "the real evangelical agenda"⁸ works against including such Christian voices within the academy.

The above rather cheerless account does not present a rosy picture for the possibility of orchestrating conversation between groups of Christians holding to differing viewpoints or between Christians and non-Christians within the academy. But, as utopian as it sounds, it is the orchestration of such conversation that is my goal. To be more exact, my goal is twofold: (1) to create forums for conversation between Christians coming from differing theological traditions or holding to differing viewpoints on important contemporary issues; (2) to create forums for conversation that will enable Christian perspectives to be heard within the academy.

To say that there are severe obstacles to the realization of my goal, some already hinted at, is gross understatement. So before presenting a foundation for my constructive proposal, based on a "postmodern opportunity," it will be necessary for me to clear out some underbrush by identifying and attempting to debunk a few popular myths that create obstacles to talking.

II. Barriers to Solving the Problem

A. *The Myth that there is One Strident, Coercive Christian Voice*

One severe obstacle to talking is the pernicious myth that there exists a single, unified "Christian voice" on any given issue, and that voice will most likely be strident, not open to conversation with others, and will primarily be interested in coercing others to accept a Christian point of view on the issue at hand. Granting that there are enough examples of such abuse to give this obstacle some prima facie credibility, it is by and large a straw man, the typical media caricature notwithstanding. This myth is fed by tendencies toward a stark polarization created

⁶Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

⁷*Ibid.*, 8, 23.

⁸George Marsden, "Discussion Narrative" in *Universitas: The Case for a New Christian University* (hereafter *Universitas*), eds. Harold Heie and Arthur F. Holmes, unpublished manuscript, 1993, 105.

by much of the literature on the heralded "culture wars." Consider, for example, the analysis provided by James Davison Hunter.⁹

Hunter defines "cultural conflict" as "political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding," and he proposes that "the cleavages at the heart of the contemporary culture war are created by . . . *the impulse toward orthodoxy* and the *impulse toward progressivism*. He then defines these two impulses as follows. "Orthodoxy . . . is the commitment on the part of adherents to an external, definable, and transcendent authority," and "such objective and transcendent authority defines, at least in the abstract, a consistent, unchangeable measure of value, purpose, goodness, and identity, both personal and collective." In contrast, "what all *progressivist* world views share in common is the tendency to resymbolize historic faiths according to the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life."¹⁰

Hunter argues persuasively that persons holding to these two polarized persuasions live in "separate worlds" because they do not share commonalities in moral vocabulary. Therefore, conversation is virtually impossible. This eliminates the "positive face of moral conflict" or "the ideal of civility in public discourse" in which each side tries to persuade the other of the superiority of its claims. What is left is the "negative face of moral conflict: the deliberate, systematic effort to discredit the opposition." As a result, dialogue has been replaced by name calling and denunciation.¹¹

Surely, then, the possibilities for conversation are dismal if one is limited to either of these two polarized camps. But what if one rejects, as I do, the either/or categories of "orthodox" or "progressivist"? My belief system is not static, where beliefs are unchangeable, so I reject the label of "orthodox" as defined by Hunter.¹² But I also believe that there are some universal truths that transcend given times and cultures, so I am not a "progressivist." I cannot accept either extreme, both of which are too simple. Rather, I choose that much more difficult middle ground where I must continuously struggle with the differentiation between beliefs that I consider unchanging and timeless and other beliefs that are only adequate at this time and place in history.

Hunter does indeed allow for positions like mine in between the "orthodox" and "progressivist," although that allowance is, unfortunately, a minor key in his analysis. For example, he notes that "the lines separating orthodox and progressive . . . are not . . . always sharp," pointing to "ideological cross-currents" represented by "pro-life feminists and libertarians, Mormon and Pentecostal homosexuals, Evangelical Christian pacifists, . . . secularists (atheists) who are politically conservative, and Fundamentalists who are socialists." And he also calls attention

⁹James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 42–45.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 128, 130, 131, 136, 250.

¹²See H. Heie, "Wanted" for my elaboration of a dynamic, process-oriented epistemological ideal.

to a group that is "harder to ignore"; "the myriad individuals that define themselves more or less in the middle of the ideological spectrum."¹³ In fact, Hunter estimates that "the number of people who actually hold strongly traditionalist or strongly progressivist positions are in the minority (perhaps 20% at each end)."¹⁴ But in our contemporary cultural climate of polarization, Hunter holds out little chance for those holding "middle-of-the road" positions to be heard, primarily due to the "technology of public discourse," which "simply does not allow for middling positions and the subtleties they imply."¹⁵

In addition to allowing for "middling positions" between the "orthodox" and "progressivist" poles, Hunter also notes that it is not easy to pigeon-hole Christians in either of these two extreme camps. He asserts that "the evidence strongly suggests that the significant divisions on public issues are no longer defined by the distinct traditions of creed, religious observance, or ecclesiastical politics." Therefore, it becomes "increasingly difficult to speak of the Protestant position or the Catholic position or the Jewish position."¹⁶ Individual members of any of these religious traditions may be "orthodox" or "progressivist."

What are the implications of Hunter's analysis for the view that there is one strident, coercive Christian voice? First, it must be admitted that there are strident Christian voices in both the orthodox and progressivist camps, voices more interested in coercion than conversation. But there is no monolithic voice, for Christian voices exist in both camps. Furthermore, there are many Christians who take various middling positions in between these extremes, depending on the issue at hand, who are also interested in conversation rather than coercion. The problem, as accurately pointed to by Hunter, is that the present cultural vehicles for communication do not adequately provide forums for conversation where such middling positions can be presented and debated. So the idea that there is one strident, coercive Christian voice is a myth. But the huge challenge will be to create viable forums that will allow a multiplicity of Christian voices to be heard and that will open the door to civil conversation with non-Christians.

B. The Myth that Religious Voices Should not be Heard

Even if one is convinced that there are non-strident, non-coercive Christians interested in genuine conversation in the academy, a formidable obstacle remains—the common view that Christians and other religious people bring their religious assumptions to the discussion table, whereas other members of the academy have no such assumptions; they come to the conversation as "religiously neutral" seekers after truth, not encumbered by prior assumptions of a religious nature. Therefore, religious voices are sectarian and should not be heard. There are two possible

¹³Hunter, 105–106.

¹⁴Ibid., 159.

¹⁵Ibid., 170.

¹⁶Ibid., 105.

responses to this apparent obstacle, depending on whether one adopts a narrow or broad definition of religion.

Stephen Carter proposes the following narrow definition of religion: "When I refer to religion, I will have in mind a tradition of group worship (as against individual metaphysic) that presupposes the existence of a sentience beyond the human and capable of acting outside of the observed principles and limits of natural science, and, further, a tradition that makes demands of some kind on its adherents."¹⁷ Assuming this definition of religion, Carter argues that religious voices need to be included in public debate based on a necessary distinction between "a critique of the content of a belief . . . [and] a critique of its source."¹⁸ Rather than concentrating on the source of a belief, we should seek to evaluate whether the belief is justified. This appropriate emphasis on justification rather than genesis allows for "epistemic diversity" regarding the source of a belief, which Carter argues "should be cherished, not ignored, and certainly not abolished." Therefore, Carter concludes that "what is needed . . . is a willingness to *listen*, not because the speaker has the *right voice* but because the speaker has the *right to speak*."¹⁹

My own response to this obstacle is based on my assumption of a broader definition of religion than that espoused by Carter. I adopt a definition of religion as any set of beliefs providing answers to the following basic questions, together with the attitudes and practices determined by those beliefs: (1) What are the fundamental characteristics of human beings? (2) What are the characteristics of nonhuman reality that are of greatest significance for human life? (3) Given the nature of humanness and the universe, how should humans try to live? (4) What methodologies should we use in seeking answers to the first three questions?²⁰ Assuming this definition, every human being is religious, for we all seek to answer these questions, however tacit and inarticulate the results of that quest may be at times. George Marsden provides a helpful example in his commentary on John Dewey:

Humanity, Dewey recognized, was innately religious. But traditional religions, which posited scientifically dubious assertions about deities, were not the healthiest expressions of the human religious character. He urged humanity, and specifically Americans, to adopt "a common faith," a public philosophy based on a morality that valued human growth in learning, knowledge, the arts, conscience, character, and the furtherance of mutual aid and affection. This moral philosophy was, of course, what Dewey hoped would be taught in the public schools, which (as is often observed) served in effect as the established church of his religion. Indeed, Dewey was more frank than most secularists in admitting the religious nature of his secular scheme. He correctly saw that secularization involved the replacement of one religion with another.²¹

¹⁷Carter, 17.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 230.

²⁰My definition of religion is adapted from a similar definition given by Monroe C. and Elizabeth L. Beardsley in *Philosophical Thinking: An Introduction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 37–38.

²¹George M. Marsden, "Are Secularists the Threat? Is Religion the Solution?" in *Insecular America*, ed. Richard J. Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 38. Walker Percy, also

If one accepts my broad definition of religion (more commonly thought of as the definition of a "worldview"), then the idea of religious neutrality is a myth. We all bring religious assumptions to the table; we simply hold to different sets of assumptions. All voices have a right to be heard, to be treated with respect, with no voice given preferential access. But even using the more common narrow definition of religion, Carter's argument is persuasive: public debate should concentrate on the adequacy of knowledge claims, whatever their "source" (allowing for "religious sources," as defined by Carter).²²

But the thorny issue of the justification of claims to knowledge still remains. If and when all voices have been heard, how does one evaluate the relative merits of the differing contents expressed by these voices? Or is the proposal of any one voice as justifiable as the proposal of any other voice? I must, therefore, deal with a third formidable obstacle to my goal: the common view that there is no basis for concluding that the content of one voice is more adequate than the content of any other voice. This common view is often associated with postmodernism. I will argue that this association is a mistake for a moderate version of postmodernism that I will embrace.

C. Postmodernism and the Myth that Perspectivalism Necessitates Relativism

A prevailing epistemological assumption of the Enlightenment was that humans can and should ignore their own traditions and particularities in the quest for "objective knowledge" that transcends any one tradition or particularity. The postmodern turn rejects this enlightenment assumption. Walter Brueggemann has concisely summarized the postmodern epistemological assumptions that have replaced the assumption that we can shed our particularities. In brief, the postmodern assumptions are that our knowing is contextual, local and pluralistic. It

using a broad definition of religion, argues that even Jean Paul Sartre, a professed atheist, was "religious." Percy uses "the word 'religious' in its root sense as signifying a radical bond . . . which connects man with reality—or the failure of such a bond—and so confers meaning to his life—or the absence of meaning." Therefore Sartre's "atheism is 'religious' in the sense . . . that [he] betrays a passionate conviction about man's nature, the world, and man's obligation in the world." *The Message in the Bottle* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 102–103.

²²Of course, many will argue that First Amendment considerations preclude "religious voices" in the conversation in the academy when the topic of conversation bears on matters political. Space will not allow me to elaborate on my rejection of this argument. In brief, I believe that a proper understanding of the First Amendment is that it precludes compulsion or preferential treatment regarding religions. It does not preclude our beliefs on public policy matters being informed by the "religious" commitments we all have. As long as there is no governmental compulsion or preferential treatment regarding our alternative religions we all ought to be included in the conversation on public policy issues. For arguments supportive of my position, see Stephen L. Carter, 105–123; George Goldberg, *Reconsecrating America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); Ronald J. Sider, "An Evangelical Vision for American Democracy: An Anabaptist Perspective," in *The Bible, Politics and Democracy*, ed. Richard J. Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 32–54; and Richard J. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

is "contextual" because "it is . . . now clear that what one knows or sees depends upon where one stands or sits." It is "local" because "it is impossible to voice large truth. All one can do is to voice local truth and propose that it pertains elsewhere." And, "knowledge is pluralistic, a cacophony of claims, each of which rings true to its own advocates . . . [but each] claim . . . is made in a pluralism where it has no formal privilege." These epistemological assumptions are succinctly captured by the word "perspectivism," (or perspectivalism), which Brueggemann defines as the view that "the world is perceived, processed, and articulated with one or another perspective, and a perspective has the power to make sense out of the rawness of experienced life, even though it cannot be 'proven' or absolutely established."²³

Nicholas Wolterstorff presents an analysis of the postmodern turn that has taken place in the academy's understanding of the very nature of "learning" that leads him to embrace a form of perspectivalism. He notes that as recently as a few decades ago, the prevailing view in the academy was that "reputable learning is a generically human enterprise." As a result, according to this "once-regnant understanding of learning, Black history, feminist sociology, Muslim political theory, and liberation theology are *bad* history, *bad* sociology, *bad* political theory, *bad* theology. In the practice of learning we are to make use only of such belief-forming dispositions as are shared among all human beings, and we are to accept only the deliverances of such shared human dispositions." Therefore, "before entering the halls of learning, we are to strip off all our particularities, particularities of gender, of race, of nationality, of religion, of social class, of age, and enter purely as human beings."²⁴

But, Wolterstorff observes, "this once-regnant self-image of the modern academy . . . has been shattered over the past quarter century."²⁵ In its place, "the conviction is now widespread that there is no such thing as generically human learning . . . The learning of the academy is unavoidably perspectival." Thus, rather than shedding one's particularity when entering the academy, one's scholarship is unavoidably informed by that particularity. This postmodern epistemology inevitably leads to what Wolterstorff calls the "pluralization of the academy."²⁶

How should Christians respond to this postmodern epistemological turn to perspectivalism? It appears to me that there are at least two versions of postmodernism to respond to. One strong version takes the dogmatic position, precluding further conversation, that because our claims to knowledge are unavoidably perspectival, reflecting our particularities, there exist no universal truths that transcend our differing perspectives. The problem with this view, as pointed out by Jeffrey Stout, is that it confuses claims about *truth* with claims about *justification*. Stout takes the position, as I do, "that there are moral truths." For example, he accepts

²³Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 8–10.

²⁴Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Can Scholarship and Christian Conviction Mix: A New Look at the Integration of Knowledge," *Universitas*, 119.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 124.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 130.

as true "the proposition that slavery is evil is true."²⁷ But the issue of justification of this claim to moral truth is a different matter. Stout argues that "What we're justified in believing about the evil of slavery varies according to the evidence and reasoning available to us in our place in culture and history," despite the fact that "the truth of the proposition that slavery is evil doesn't vary in the same way."²⁸

William Placher summarizes Stout's position as follows: "The way we can go about justifying a belief is always context dependent, but the truth claimed for that belief is not." Therefore, Placher adds, when it comes to justification of a claim to universal truth, "all argument operates within some particular tradition . . . There is no universal standard of rationality . . . We argue within the context of some tradition, and we begin with the rules and assumptions a particular conversation partner happens to share"²⁹ (more about that later). Consistent with the positions of Stout and Placher, I reject the strong postmodern position that there exist no universal truths that transcend our particularities. But I accept a moderate postmodernism characterized by my beliefs that my claims to knowledge, including my belief in certain universal truths, do unavoidably reflect my particular perspective and that my attempts to justify my beliefs are context dependent.

But it is a mistake to view my moderate postmodernism as necessitating relativism, if what you mean by relativism is that there exist no standards for evaluating the relative adequacy of competing knowledge claims (any one claim is as good as any other). Postmodern thinkers do not necessarily argue for such relativism. For example, Richard Rorty rejects "a kind of silly relativism which says that the views of idiosyncratic nature mystics about lumps are somehow 'on a par with' the view of professors of chemistry . . . or that free-association interpretations of texts are 'on a par with' ordinary philological or historic ones."³⁰ Rorty asserts that "Relativism certainly is self-refuting, but there is a difference between saying that every community is as good as every other [relativism] and saying that we have to work out from the networks we are, from the communities with which we presently identify [perspectivalism]."³¹

Similarly, in reflecting on the basis for "truly ethical action," Stanley Fish believes that there exist "norms and standards" for judgment. However, he proposes that such norms and standards "are specific, contingent, historically produced, and potentially revisable," rather than being transcendent and timeless. More specifically, "since those who are embedded in local practices—of literary criticism, law,

²⁷Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and their Discontents* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 21–22.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 30.

²⁹William Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 123.

³⁰Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 89.

³¹*Ibid.*, 202.

education, or anything else—are ‘naturally’ heirs of the norms and standards built into those practices, they can never be without . . . norms and standards and are thus always acting in value-laden and judgmental ways simply by being competent actors in their workplaces.” Thus, the normative corresponds to a “local rather than a transcendental realm.”³²

Now, both Rorty and Fish would argue that the historically embedded standards for evaluation of knowledge claims are closely related to the “purpose at hand.”³³ And I leave to those more conversant with their entire corpus of writings the open judgment as to whether they would argue for the existence of standards for evaluating the legitimacy of various proposed “purposes” (if not, they would appear to be relativists, as commonly charged).³⁴ My limited purpose here is to point out that neither of these prominent postmodernists argue that perspectivalism necessarily precludes the existence of standards for the evaluation of knowledge claims, *provided that* the conversation partners in the given area of discourse have agreed on the purpose for the conversation. As a perspectivalist, I also accept the position that standards for the evaluation of knowledge claims are historical products embedded in the practices engaged in by persons involved in specific areas of discourse.³⁵ This belief reflects my conviction that as a fallible, finite knower I cannot claim to have a God’s-eye view of knowledge. This leads me to propose the following postmodern *conversation process*.

³²Stanley Fish, “The Common Touch, or, One Size Fits All,” in Darryl J. Gless and Barbara Herrnstein Smith, eds., *The Politics of Liberal Education* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 250–251. It appears that Fish is making the same distinction that Stout makes between truth and justification. It is the standards for justification that are local or context dependent rather than transcendent. But this does not preclude the possible existence of “transcendent truths.” In fact, Fish allows for belief in such “transcendent truths,” with the understanding that such truths can be fully known only to a God. In his own words: “It is difficult not to conclude either (a) that there are no such [transcendent] truths, or (and this is my preferred alternative) (b) that while there are such truths, they could only be known from a god’s-eye view. Since none of us occupies that view (because none of us is a god), the truths any of us find compelling will always be partial . . .” Stanley Fish, *There’s No Such Thing as Free Speech . . . And It’s a Good Thing Too* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8.

³³See, for example, Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, 89–90.

³⁴As an example that suggests the possibility of such relativism, I cite Rorty’s reflection on members of society “as a ‘band of eccentrics’ collaborating merely for ‘purposes of self protection’ . . .” Quotation from Jeffrey Stout (p. 241), drawing on Rorty, “The Contingency of Community,” *London Review of Books* (24 July 1986), 13. What is the status, for Rorty, of this “purpose of self-protection?” Does he propose standards for evaluating the legitimacy of this purpose? Is this purpose self-evident? Does this purpose reflect commitment to at least one universal value, survival? Those more familiar with all of Rorty’s scholarship will need to respond.

³⁵Such prominent Christian thinkers as Alasdair MacIntyre and Nicholas Wolterstorff take epistemological positions in sympathy with this postmodern view of the historicity of norms and standards for judgment in a given area of discourse. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 7, 348; and *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 190. Also see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Universitas*, 134.

In brief, I believe I can, as a Christian, authentically commit myself to the following moderate version of postmodernism, defined in terms of a *conversation process* rather than in terms of an a priori judgment as to what the results of that conversation will be. Whatever the topic at hand, I come to the conversation recognizing that my perspective is inevitably based on my particular Christian tradition. I assume that my conversation partners are equally aware of the fact that their perspectives are likewise informed by their respective particularities. We then talk, engaging in what Wolterstorff has called "cross-perspectival conversation." The goal is indeed to seek after truth by seeking common ground. We first seek common ground about the purpose of the conversation and the standards for evaluating the relative merits of competing knowledge claims. We then seek common ground in our beliefs about the topic at hand. And throughout this conversation process, no conversant imposes on the conversation an a priori judgment that some or all of his/her relevant beliefs are universal or are not universal. If the common ground resulting from the conversation includes the belief that a certain knowledge claim transcends the particularities of the conversants, so be it. If not, so be it. One cannot prejudice the results of an authentic conversation.

Wolterstorff suggests that the postmodern conversation project I call for will be possible only if the conversants are willing to "face in two directions." Whereas it is important for them "to engage in reflection with members of their own communities," it is also important "that they engage in conversation with those who represent other perspectives, so as to both share insight and submit to correction."³⁶ His particular encouragement to Christian scholars in this postmodern era is that "whereas for a long time . . . it has been the calling of the Christian scholar to emphasize that Christianity offers a distinctive perspective on reality, the time may be coming when it will be at least as important to emphasize our shared humanity and the importance of mutual listening."³⁷

But is it possible to find common ground in a conversation involving those holding to radically differing perspectives? Wolterstorff answers "yes," based on the claim that we all learn "epistemic practices" (ways of generating and supporting particular claims to knowledge), and that certain epistemic practices and the results of using those practices are not peculiar to a particular person or group adhering to a particular perspective. Therefore, it is possible for two persons from different particularities to correct each other by seeking commonalities in epistemic practices and results. In Wolterstorff's words: "I do my best to tap into those [commonalities] and he does his best to tap into ones for me."³⁸ But Wolterstorff is careful to note that this search for commonalities is not limited to beliefs; it includes appeal to experience: "You do your best to . . . tap into something in the other person . . . sometimes you give arguments which appeal to beliefs that the other person already has . . . But you also present him/her with experiences from a wide variety

³⁶Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Universitas*, 136–137.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 137.

³⁸Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Discussion Narrative," *Universitas*, 185.

of sources," including "presenting him/her with a different mode of life. That is sometimes the relevant kind of experience."³⁹

I endorse Wolterstorff's proposed strategy for orchestrating cross-perspectival conversation by seeking for common ground in the conversant's epistemic practices and the results of those practices. And if all members of the academy would accept this postmodern conversation project, this would present a postmodern opportunity for Christian perspectives to be heard in the academy. If the postmodern academy is indeed committed to pluralism and diversity, as its rhetoric suggests, then all voices ought to be heard whether they present feminist perspectives, gay/lesbian perspectives, Muslim perspectives or Christian perspectives.⁴⁰ A postmodern conversation project could bring these varied voices to the same table.

Of course, the mutual listening this conversation project would require seems to be a rarity in the academy and elsewhere. Such mutual listening certainly cannot be legislated. And besides, the very call for mutual listening in cross-perspectival conversation reflects a particular perspective that not everyone shares. As Eleonore Stump has asked in a thoughtful response to Wolterstorff's proposal for cross-perspectival conversation: Isn't the position that all the particularities have the right to be heard in that conversation a universalist position?⁴¹ It appears to me that it is. And it is a claim to universal truth that is not shared by all humans. If I am going to be a consistent perspectivalist, I must allow for the possible perspective that the most appropriate response to disagreement is to shout or to hit rather than to talk.

My response to this problem is two-fold. First, it is not necessary for every human being to decide to engage in this cross-perspectival conversation project as I have described it. But if a person decides to become a participant in this conversation project, I believe that inherent in the very nature of the project are

³⁹Ibid., 192.

⁴⁰For a similar argument, see George M. Marsden, "The Soul of the American University," in *The Secularization of the Academy*, eds. George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 38–41. Marsden proposes that "seriously religious people . . . begin to campaign actively for universities to apply their professions of pluralism more consistently" (p. 38), noting that "especially in the universities, which, of all the institutions in a society, should be open to the widest-ranging free inquiry, such a broad pluralism would involve allowing all sorts of Christian and other religiously based intellectual traditions back into the discussion" (p. 39).

⁴¹Eleonore Stump, "Universalism and Particularism," *Universitas*, 162. Stump defines "universalism" as the belief that there are "truths which all human beings in ideal cognitive circumstances ought to accept" (p. 173). She also asks how cross-perspectival conversation can lead to "correction" of one's own perspective if there are no truths that transcend particular perspectives (p. 163). It appears to me that Wolterstorff's search for "common ground" is a step in the direction of some aspects of "universalism," but with a significant procedural qualification. Note carefully that Wolterstorff is only seeking for common ground in a given conversation in space and time, which is far less utopian than seeking to reach agreement on universals applicable to all of humankind (even if one believes, as I do, that such universal truths do exist).

certain "ideals for conversation" that will maximize the potential for conversation partners to attain some common ground by talking and listening to each other.

III. The Solution: Ideals for Cross-Perspectival Conversation

A. Openness to Knowledge Emerging Through Conversation

One of the most obvious and common deterrents to meaningful cross-perspectival conversation is the a priori assumption that my perspective is right, yours is wrong, and I have nothing to learn from you (the charade becoming complete when I then say to you "Let's talk"). In his excellent book, *Faithful Persuasion*, David Cunningham argues for a contrary assumption, which is to "admit that our knowledge is formed in the midst of argument (rather than prior to it)."⁴² An implication of this alternative assumption is that speech is not merely descriptive of an a priori understanding of reality, but a proper understanding of reality can emerge in speech. If we are truly open to knowledge emerging through speech, then we must be careful not to come to a conversation about any issue with a priori knowledge claims that are not open to refinement as a result of the conversation.

B. Commitment to Aspire to the Requirements of an Ideal Speech Community

Cross-perspectival conversation will thrive only if the conversants embrace the possibility of knowledge emerging from the conversation, whether in the form of changed beliefs or deeper insights and fuller comprehension relative to one's system of beliefs. This first ideal is important, but it is not sufficient. Further ideals for cross-perspectival conversation emerge from the work of Jurgen Habermas on the nature of ideal speech communities.⁴³

In brief, Habermas argues that when we decide to engage in conversation we commit ourselves to trying to persuade our conversation partners. And the fact that we are trying to persuade one another implies a commitment to the "ideal speech situation" where all conversants are free to speak, and no force is exerted "except the force of the better argument."⁴⁴ As a result, it appears that Habermas

⁴²David Cunningham, *Faithful Persuasion: In Aid of a Rhetoric of Christian Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 28. Cunningham's rhetorical analysis adds an important emphasis to Wolterstorff's ideal of cross-perspectival conversation by noting that the persuasiveness of a speaker's arguments will often be affected by the hearers' judgments as to the "character" of the speaker (pp. 101, 127-145). As an example, he observes that "part of the persuasiveness of the civil rights movement . . . was its emphasis on relating action to argument . . . Those who rode the buses, sat at the lunch counters, and subjected themselves to physical attacks acted in ways that authenticated their words" (p. 140).

⁴³See Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (hereafter, *Moral Consciousness*) (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990); *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. One (hereafter, Volume 1) and Vol. Two (hereafter, Volume 2) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 & 1987).

⁴⁴Habermas, Volume 1, 25. Doug Jacobsen has aptly referred to this view as "epistemological pacifism."

has identified some values that transcend any particular culture, at least for those who decide to engage in such conversation. In particular, Habermas identifies the following conversational ideals.

Reciprocity and mutual recognition—in seeking common ground, each conversant takes into account the interests and viewpoints of all other conversants, and gives them equal weight to his or her own interests and viewpoint.⁴⁵

Inclusiveness—in action oriented situations, every group potentially affected by the results of the discussion is included in the conversation.⁴⁶

Equal voice—each conversant competent to speak is allowed to speak.⁴⁷

These ideals will never be adequately attained in our real world. So you may believe that I am going from the sublime to the ridiculous when I point to an even higher standard as proposed by Mark Schwehn. Schwehn's bold proposal is that "all higher learning depends not simply upon the possession of certain cognitive skills but also upon the possession of moral dispositions or virtues that enable inquiry to proceed."⁴⁸ He identifies such spiritual virtues as humility, faith, self-denial, charity and friendship.

In the context of students (not to mention faculty) learning from the writings of others, Schwehn takes humility to mean "in practical terms, the *presumption* of wisdom and authority *in the author*." By "faith," Schwehn means that "we typically believe what we are questioning and at the same time question what we are believing." By "self-denial," Schwehn means that "we must be prepared to *abandon* some of our most cherished beliefs . . . we must . . . be willing to give up what we think we know for what is true, if genuine learning is to take place." Schwehn's view of "charity" includes "[putting] the best construction on everything." And finally, conversants exhibit friendship when they "offer their criticisms of one another benevolently . . . thereby wishing one another well."⁴⁹

Combining some of Schwehn's insights, I now propose supplementing Habermas's ideals with the following further ideals for cross-perspectival conversation.

Humility—openness to the real possibility that what I now believe is false, and that I can correct a false belief by listening to someone who disagrees with me.

Charity—putting the best construction on what another person says by trying to see things from his or her perspective, and expressing my disagreements with kindness.

As a perspectivalist, what status can I now claim for these five conversational ideals? From my particular Christian perspective, I believe that all Christians engaged in conversation ought to be committed to these ideals for I see them included in any viable Christian ethic. But I also believe that all humans engaged

⁴⁵Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, p. X (commentary by Thomas McCarthy), p. 130.

⁴⁶Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, 122; Volume 2, 95 (Habermas commenting on the work of G. H. Mead).

⁴⁷Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, 89.

⁴⁸Mark R. Schwehn, *Exiles From Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 44.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 48, 49, 51, 78.

in conversation ought to embrace these ideals, as appropriate to our common humanity, fully recognizing that we typically fall far short of these ideals. As Freud, Marx, Nietzsche and other proponents of a hermeneutic of suspicion have correctly taught us, there are good reasons for us to be suspicious of ourselves as well as others. And the Christian story certainly does not minimize our human propensities toward self-deceit, pride and selfishness, in contrast to humility and charity. But I think I understand what the Christian ideal is, and from my perspective that is also the human ideal.

But, of course, not everyone's perspective embraces these ideals. Two types of disagreement come to mind. First, a person can take the ethical position that violence is preferable to persuasion: It is better to hit or shout (a form of violence) than to talk. If I could do so before getting shouted down or hit, I would try to convince such a person of the benefits of talking, starting with an attempt to reach some common ground as to ideals for our initial conversation (probably somewhere between shouting and my five ideals). But if he is not even willing to begin such a conversation, then I can only regret that he has rejected my invitation to talk. If this person is a member of the academy and I had a chance to say it before getting violated, I would suggest that a commitment to conversation rather than shouting or hitting is fundamental to the nature of the academy. If he disagrees but is willing to talk about that premise on my part, then maybe we could get a conversation started. If not, then we will have to go our separate ways.

A second type of disagreement may come from a person whose perspective, like mine, also embraces the need for conversation but who does not share my five ideals for conversation. We would first need to talk about that disagreement and try to attain some common ground as to what appropriate alternative ideals ought to be. I would not start that conversation by arguing that my ideals are inescapably entailed by the very meaning of "conversation." Rather, I would make the more modest claim that common commitment to the ideals I suggest will most likely help our conversation to be fruitful. And I would back up that empirical claim with years of experience of my trying to be a good conversation partner, including too many "war stories" as to how conversations can deteriorate when there is no prior commitment to these ideals.

In our real world, then, characterized by deeply rooted perspectival differences, what steps can Christians actually take to begin implementing a postmodern project of cross-perspectival conversation, especially taking into account the fact that not all humans share the particular conversational ideals I propose? I close this essay with a concrete proposal that will, hopefully, transform my words into actions.

IV. Implementing the Solution: The Christian Academy Modeling a Community of Conversation

I have argued for the importance and possibility of cross-perspectival conversation in our postmodern era that would enable Christian perspectives to be heard in the academy. And this essay would be unauthentic if I didn't welcome

conversation about the adequacy or inadequacy of my arguments. I hope such conversation ensues within Christian scholarly circles and even within the larger academy. But given the idealistic nature of my proposed conversation project, I think that the only ultimate proof that my ideal project is realizable is to stop talking about it and, to borrow a popular phrase, "just do it." Therefore, I submit a challenge to the Christian academy to commit itself to modeling a community of conversation, and when it has demonstrated that this can be done amongst Christians, to invite fellow human beings who are not Christian believers to join in the ongoing conversation. Various christian academic organizations could accept this challenge, whether they be individual Christian colleges or universities, coalitions thereof or professional societies of Christian scholars. Since my own professional experience has been primarily with Christian colleges, I will now suggest a few hints for implementation at such colleges.⁵⁰

A. Seek Commitment to Ideals for Cross-Perspectival Conversation

Most, if not all, Christian colleges that I am aware of expect community members to adhere to certain conditions for membership, often of a doctrinal or behavioral nature. But one doesn't often see "humility" in such a listing of conditions. Of course, "humility" cannot be legislated, especially not in a college catalog. But I propose that some Christian college include in its definitions of identity and mission a commitment to a set of ideals for cross-perspectival conversation. I view the ideals I have proposed as a possible starting point for conversation at such a college. Members of the particular college community may advance alternative proposals based on their differing perspectives. But it is important that the college's own cross-perspectival conversation lead to common ground regarding a set of conversational ideals to which the institution and its individual members can express a common commitment.

If a Christian college decides on a set of conversational ideals that include some version of Habermas's conditions for an ideal speech community, then great care must be taken to insure that the college's administrative and governance structure (not just its curricular and co-curricular programming) is consistent with that commitment. Kenneth Strike has proposed that such a commitment will emphasize a democratic decision-making process that values the "better argument" rather than power; equality and reciprocity rather than bureaucratic hierarchy; and autonomy and solidarity rather than domination and coercion.⁵¹

⁵⁰These suggestions should be viewed as extensions of my previous proposals for Christian colleges presented in "Wanted." In that essay I emphasize the need for Christian colleges to provide environments where students and faculty who are committed to the essentials of the Christian story have ample space to dialogue with other community members toward the end of examining and refining their beliefs, at the same time that they are given opportunity to act on their beliefs. This present essay extends this earlier emphasis by paying attention to the ideals that will enable such dialogue to be fruitful.

⁵¹See Kenneth A. Strike, "Professionalism, Democracy and Discursive Communities: Normative Reflections on Restructuring," *American Educational Research Journal* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 255-275.

B. Orchestrate a Plurality of Christian Voices

David Cunningham notes a distinction that Mikhail Bakhtin makes between "single-voiced, 'monologic' discourse" and "multilayered, 'polyphonic' discourse." Using this distinction, Cunningham then observes that "in the modern age Christian theologians have attempted too often to isolate a single 'melody line'—to demonstrate the essential concept, to identify the golden thread that holds everything together." Cunningham concludes that "Bakhtin's praise of polyphony challenges us to speak about Christian theology in a way that does not reduce its multiform character to a tedious monotone," and "rhetoric can help us understand that Christian theology has neither a single essence nor a fixed form. Rather, theology bears a dynamic and polyphonic character: the character of faithful persuasion."⁵²

Extending Cunningham's comments beyond the realm of Christian theology into all areas of learning, I believe that a Christian college wishing to commit itself to cross-perspectival conversation ought to orchestrate a plurality of Christian voices. One of the greatest detriments to authentic conversation between Christians on any given issue is the questionable though not uncommon view that there is a one-to-one correspondence between question and Christian response.

It is difficult to generalize on how best to orchestrate this plurality of Christian voices at a given Christian college since some Christian colleges have distinct theological heritages that must be respected, and some are interdenominational in nature. However, I believe my conversational ideal will most likely flourish in a collegiate setting where there is a minimalist statement of common theological beliefs to which all community members are expected to adhere, thereby allowing for legitimate debate regarding the many beliefs about which equally committed Christians disagree.

If a given Christian college has a distinct theological tradition, I would argue that my conversational ideal is best implemented if community membership does not require adherence to that tradition, provided the community has a "critical mass" of persons committed to that tradition and provided the other community members are "in sympathy with" that tradition. In cases where college by-laws require commitment to that tradition on the part of all community members, I would argue that steps should be taken to bring "outside Christian voices" into the conversation at hand.

In my estimation, the Christian college setting that are most amenable to implementing my conversational ideal will be interdenominationally Protestant or more ecumenically Christian (including, for example, community members from the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox traditions). The troubling tension, however, based on my own experience, is that the more diversity there is in the beliefs of community members, the greater tendency there is for contentiousness, pointing again to the need for all community members to commit themselves to the

⁵²Cunningham, 205.

college's agreed upon ideals for cross-perspectival conversation. This also points to a need to rethink the college curriculum in ways that maximize the educational benefits of disagreements rather than the more typical strategies of ignoring or camouflaging the disagreements, which leads to my final suggestion.

C. Teach the Disagreements

In a provocative essay pertinent to the major debate on the appropriate "canon" for liberal arts education, Gerald Graff asserts that "no educational proposal is worth much that has no strategy for dealing with disagreement."⁵³ Citing our need to "agree to disagree," Graff proposes such a strategy for processing disagreement: "The most educationally effective way to deal with present conflicts over education and culture is to teach the conflicts themselves. And not just teach the conflicts in separate classrooms, but structure them into the curriculum, using them to give the curriculum the coherence that it badly lacks."⁵⁴ Graff notes that "to advocate 'teaching the conflicts' is to go against one of the sacred taboos of pedagogy, which is that students should be exposed to the *results* of their elders' conflicts, but not to the conflicts themselves."⁵⁵

In a later work, Graff elaborates on means for teaching the disagreements. He questions a "traditional pluralism," where "different viewpoints are separately represented," favoring a "framework in which each position 'acknowledges its allied or contestatory relation to other positions.'"⁵⁶ For example, he believes it is a "mistake to institutionalize 'cultural diversity' as a separate set of course requirements." Rather, "if the very idea of cultural diversity implies dialogue and debate rather than isolation and marginalization, then non-Western culture needs to be put into dialogue with Western culture."⁵⁷

Such dialogue between competing perspectives can be built into a given course, up to a point, through incorporating the controversies into the "reading list and course framework"⁵⁸ or through team teaching,⁵⁹ provided the team instructors bring competing perspectives to the course and are willing to debate them in class. One instructor in such a successful team taught course observed that "our students were able to argue with us because they saw us arguing with each other."⁶⁰

⁵³Gerald Graff, "Teach the Conflicts," in *The Politics of Liberal Education*, Gless and Herrnstein Smith, 70.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 57, 72.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁶Gerald Graff, *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 186. Graff is here quoting from a department newsletter for the English and Textual Studies major at Syracuse University.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 142.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 179.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 14.

But a limitation of these course-specific strategies is that the "courses are not in dialogue with one another." It would be better "if classrooms formed a conversation, instead of a set of ships passing in the night."⁶¹ Graff notes two strategies for such conversation between courses. One is "teacher-swapping," involving "two or more instructors exchanging classes periodically or meeting their classes jointly on scheduled occasions . . . to discuss a common text." Another strategy is thematic course clustering "formed by the integration of several courses (usually but not necessarily from different disciplines) around a common theme."⁶² But still further steps need to be taken to break out of our "course fetish," such as "an adaptation of the academic conference or symposium to the needs of the undergraduate curriculum,"⁶³ involving both faculty and students in conversation about competing perspectives outside the context of the official college curriculum.

The Christian college committed to orchestrating a plurality of Christian voices must commit itself to conversational strategies such as those proposed by Graff so that the college models authentic communication between Christians who hold to differing perspectives.

D. Inviting Non-Christian Academics to Join the Conversation

My first proposal for "just doing it" (orchestrating cross-perspectival conversation in the academy) was for members of the Christian academy, such as those scholars at a given Christian college or university, to model a community of conversation, and this includes commitment to an agreed upon set of ideals for cross-perspectival conversation, orchestration of a plurality of Christian voices and the development of strategies for "teaching the disagreements" between Christian scholars. Given the difficulty in persuading academics who are not committed to the Christian faith that many Christians want to enter into authentic conversation, this actual modeling of a community of conversation by the Christian academy will be a more effective means of persuasion than abstract argument.

My second proposal then follows very simply from my first proposal. When an organization in the Christian academy has committed itself to being a community of conversation and has actually demonstrated its viability, then that organization should invite academics external to the organization to join the cross-perspectival conversation.⁶⁴ That extended conversation should also orchestrate a plurality of voices and "teach the disagreements." But a few critical questions remain. First,

⁶¹Ibid., 106, 118.

⁶²Ibid., 180.

⁶³Ibid., 188.

⁶⁴Space does not permit me to deal adequately with the relationship between my two proposals with respect to the role of the Christian student at the Christian college in question. In brief, my experience suggests that too many Christian young people come to Christian colleges remarkably uninformed about their own Christian tradition. Therefore, I believe it appropriate during the underclass undergraduate years for the focus to be on cross-perspectival conversation between Christians so that students can be adequately rooted in their own Christian tradition. They will then be adequately prepared to work outward from

can these scholars from outside the Christian organization be expected to commit themselves to a conversation process in the first place? My answer is "yes," based on my premise that conversation is fundamental to the nature of the academy.

However, assuming a common commitment to conversation, do other scholars in the academy have to share a commitment to the conversational ideals embraced by this Christian college? No, their particular perspectives may suggest alternative ideals for conversation. If so, the first item for this cross-perspectival conversation should be the search for common ground as to the conversational ideals that will make productive broader conversation feasible.

Finally, why should Christians want to invite non-Christians to join the conversation in the first place? That is an ethical question that I can only answer from within my own Christian perspective. I believe it is the calling of the Christian scholar to seek better understanding of the nature of God's creation, and I believe that cross-perspectival conversation with scholars having different perspectives can enhance my understanding. I have much to learn from others, including those who do not share my faith perspective. I also believe that part of the "witness" of the Christian scholar called to be "salt and light" in the world is to share scholarship informed by Christian assumptions with other scholars who do not share those assumptions. Furthermore, I believe that part of my Christian calling to "love my neighbor" is to engage my fellow human being in authentically human conversation as I understand it. It is most appropriate for Christians to issue the invitation for fully human conversation.⁶⁵

their own interpretive community. I would then propose that during the upperclass undergraduate years steps should be taken to orchestrate increasing levels of cross-perspectival conversation with persons committed to other religions. Some would argue that this broader cross-perspectival conversation is best reserved for graduate school, when the conversants are most adequately prepared for it. I have sympathy for that argument, but I still believe that such broad cross-perspectival conversation is very important for the education of all undergraduates, including those who will not go on to graduate school.

⁶⁵I would like to thank Phil Kenneson of Milligan College for very helpful conversations that provided the kernel for this essay. Special thanks are also extended to the following faculty members at Messiah College who provided helpful critiques of a first draft of this essay: Ron Burwell, Doug and Rhonda Jacobsen, Samuel Smith and Bill Trollinger. I learned by listening and talking. I also thank Caroline Simon and Bill Hasker for their very helpful criticisms of a later draft.